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# Psychology of the Child in the Classroom

DON C. CHARLES



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PSYCHOLOGY  
*of the* CHILD  
*in the* CLASSROOM



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THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, NEW YORK  
COLLIER-MACMILLAN LIMITED, LONDON

19.8.2008  
13590

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Third Printing, 1965

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, NEW YORK  
COLLIER-MACMILLAN CANADA, LTD., TORONTO, ONTARIO

Printed in the United States of America





## Preface

A GOOD TEACHER deals with the “whole child” socially and emotionally, but she must deal with him primarily as a learner. It is desirable that she know of his inheritance, his emotional relations with his family, the score on his IQ test. It is imperative, however, that she react to him, stimulate and guide him, curb him—in a word, deal with him *practically* almost as soon as he walks into her classroom.

Whatever altruistic and emotional reasons a teacher may have for doing well by children, society makes demands for competence that the school must respond to. One of these demands arises from the increasingly evident fact that half-educated or poorly educated adults are virtually unemployable. Through personal or educational failure, our nation is faced with the spectacle of increasing unemployment on one hand, and a lack of competent workers on the other. The teacher can work realistically and successfully with the child only if her knowledge and understanding are adequate to the task.

What knowledge, and what understanding? Learning will occur most efficiently when the teacher knows about the age group she is teaching (what nine-year-olds are like in *general*, for example), when she is aware of the *range* of behavior in this group (what levels of maturity of intelligence, physical development, social development, and the like are represented in her one class), and most importantly, of course, when she understands (or, more accurately, reaches an adequate understanding of) each individual child within her cognizance. She cannot teach effectively unless she has discovered what the child is

ready to learn—or in some cases *whether* he is ready to learn what she must teach. She must discover what is important and satisfying to him, because children, like adults, attack and work at those tasks which promise or provide satisfaction or rewards.

While the student cannot be disassembled into component intellectual, social, and emotional parts, it is difficult to study him without examining these “parts” somewhat distinctly and separately. Herein lies the plan of this book. The first chapter will be concerned with what it is that a child strives for—what makes his life meaningful, satisfying, and exciting. If a teacher does not have some fairly comprehensive ideas about this, or does not exert a conscientious effort to understand it, her study of child characteristics becomes little different from the study of animal husbandry: “Conformation of the animal, characteristics of good breeding. Proper nutrition, training the animal to show, etc. . . .”

Next will be considered the “equipment” the child has for satisfying these needs, reaching his goals, fulfilling his own expectations. What does he start with? What does he acquire? If the child’s needs and his own characteristics—his “readiness”—are clearly understood, we should be able to construct from this something of the atmosphere necessary to encourage the best in him. It should be possible, too, to determine the reverse of this—that is, the nature of the most common causes of difficulty, or what most frequently interferes with the child’s realization of his hopes and needs. The discussion of his capacities and their realization constitutes the major part of this book.

Many books about children are divided into age studies—the child at six, at seven, and so on. There is some justification for this approach. Six-year-old children do have much in common, especially since most states insist that they all be in the first grade at this age. But the reasons for *not* studying children in this age-grade fashion seem stronger to this writer than the reasons for it. Even at age six, one will find a range of as much as five years of mental age, and perhaps only a little narrower range of social and physical maturity. Therefore the topical approach is used here, so that one may speak of stages or of a sequence of development in the individual child without being bound too much by months and years.



Because the teacher needs specific and practical advice as well as general knowledge, much attention is devoted to suggestions for working with children.

The approach of this book is generally informal. Wherever quotations or summaries of research studies are given, appropriate documentation is naturally used. Otherwise, the ideas and understandings advanced are generalizations well supported by evidence from many sources; further reading of the reference material will lead the reader to specific studies and sources. The author feels free also (as he does in his own classes) to advance some notions or beliefs not so well buttressed by evidence. As long as *opinion* is advertised as such and not confused with *fact*, no harm should ensue. It is hoped that the reader will be stimulated to some thinking that will produce new ideas of his or her own.

One other comment. It is customary to use the masculine gender in speaking of and to readers of books of this sort. The author feels that this is discriminatory and unrealistic: the vast majority of elementary teachers and of others who work with children is female. Whether this is good or desirable is another question, but since it is so, the feminine will be used throughout.



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# I

## Motivation:

### Why Children Learn

CHILDREN LEARN because they want to or need to; they often fail because they do not want or need to learn. Obviously these statements and the phrase in the title, "Why Children Learn," tell only part of the story. Physical and mental maturity, previously acquired skills, teaching methods, and similar attributes of the child or the situation are influential in the learning process. Motivation is so much a prerequisite, however, that other factors become inoperative when motivation is lacking.

Recognizing the centrality of need or desire in readiness for learning, the teacher may be tempted to excuse her own failings by blaming the students for not wanting to learn. The reader has only to introspect a bit about her own experiences as a learner (in ballet or piano lessons, sewing instruction, or geometry, for instance) to admit that there is some justice in this claim. But many originally unmotivated youngsters *do* learn ballet and piano, they do learn to cook and sew, they do learn to like and understand mathematics. Why? Largely, perhaps, because some teacher understood them and her subject well enough to make use of existing but unrecognized motivation, or to develop a desire to learn.

Miss Ferris, a shiny, newly minted music teacher fresh from teacher's college did not understand this. She was scholarly, competent, and very, very serious. She planned to teach "music appreciation" once a week to third-graders in a school that had previously had a rather haphazard music program—mostly thumping

around the room in time to march music, and singing rhythmic little songs. Joan, a class member, was potentially motivated. She liked to hear her brother's Dixieland records at home and rather enjoyed the raucous "pop" music she heard from her teenage sister's transistor radio. All in all, a good situation for learning existed.

Miss Ferris did not intend to pander to popular tastes. She started her class with a recording of some heavy classical music with little recognizable melody. The class was first astounded and then disgusted. This was not music, but noise. Their reaction was to express their disgust and add to the noise. Joan's report at home, echoing the consensus of her friends, was "Boy, is that Miss Ferris stupid!"

This young teacher lost an opportunity which was regained only through considerable effort and hard work. She had to learn what the children knew and liked, to start with music near enough to their tastes—folk music, for example—so that the records were enjoyable to them, and then gradually to upgrade their tastes.

Teachers may err—and fail—just as readily, but perhaps not so noticeably, by underestimating their students.

Take the case of a bright boy in this same third grade. He has visited the Smithsonian Institution, has stopped in half a dozen "Indian Villages" on his family's tours, has seen a couple of television documentaries on Indian life, and has had read to him a simple but accurate anthropological book on Indians. He is likely to be less than thrilled—or stimulated—by making a colored-paper tepee as his contribution to his class's study of Indian life. He may find it a moderately pleasant way to pass the time, but it scarcely satisfies much of his curiosity or leads him on to much higher learning. Obviously, Indians as subjects and tepees as projects both may have much to commend them, but the teacher needs to know enough about her pupils to learn what motives are present and what may be some reasonable routes to the satisfaction of these.

Some aspects of the vital topic of motivation will be examined in this chapter. What motives do all human beings share, and what determines which ones outweigh others at a given time? What motives are greatest for children of different ages, and how are they exhibited? How well do the common motives of the

school relate to those of the children there? How can one encourage some motives and dampen others? Can new motives be inculcated in a child? These are some of the questions to be explored.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps a comment about terminology should be made at this point. The terms "drive," "need," and "motive" are used for different aspects of the activation and channeling of behavior. Writers differ somewhat in their usage of the terms, and considerable overlap exists in the literature. In this chapter, basic conditions activating the organism will be termed "need"; "motivation" will be used to denote the channeling or directing of behavior toward satisfaction of the need. It should also be noted that no one theory of motivation will be espoused here. There are many such theories, each with its own proponents, some data in support, and frequently with highly specialized terminology.

## Motivation as a Channeler of Energy

Analogy can be overworked, but it has its uses. The human organism—any child—may be thought of as a kind of mobile device for generating, storing, and releasing energy. Like the familiar automobile storage battery and generator combination, the device (child) has a certain energy capacity, a source of new energy, and a variety of possible release or use channels. Like automotive electrical systems, there is considerable difference between one "device" and another. But both electrical and human systems have a common characteristic: at any given time there is just so much energy available for use. *What is used for one purpose is not available for another.* If a motorist grinds away with the starter of his car in cold weather, the lights will dim, the radio fade, the heater fan slow down, and so on. Probably he will choose to switch off all these devices in order to have the maximum electrical energy available for starter and ignition.

<sup>1</sup> A useful, school-oriented discussion of motivation may be found in Chapter 2, "Motivation," in Townsend, E. A., and Burke, P. J., *Learning for Teachers* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962). See also Chapter 6, "Human Needs and Motives," in Baller, W. R., *Readings in the Psychology of Human Growth and Development* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1962).

The child functions in similar fashion. If he requires all his energies to satisfy one need (getting enough to eat in an underdeveloped society, for example), there will certainly be little or none left over for some other activity (keeping clean, for another example). This seems obvious, but in dealing with people day by day it is easy to forget. Instead of asking herself, "Why won't he try to learn the multiplication tables?" the teacher might more profitably ask, "Where is he channeling his energy, since there is obviously little left for classroom tasks?"

Ray is an example of a youngster whose energies are absorbed by activities outside the classroom. He is twelve and in the sixth grade, but he would probably be retarded a year or two if his school did not have the policy of promoting despite some failure. His intelligence-test scores on three occasions have been in the "average" range—94, 97, and 102—and his teachers feel that these scores are an accurate index of his ability. He reads at about grade 4.5 level, and his arithmetic skills are only a little better. He is not a "problem" in the classroom: he does not sleep, or shuffle, or disturb others unduly. He is simply disinterested. He is large and heavy for his age, but is fast and accurate in his motor responses. His consuming passion is sports, especially the widely publicized games of baseball and football. He has been a Little League success in baseball, and he sees himself as a big-time professional in a few years.

His teachers have craftily tried to trick him into study, using sports as bait—for example, reading books on baseball, calculating batting averages, etc.—but he is not to be thus inveigled. He is a "doer" and certainly not a thinker.

It is unwise to jump to psychological conclusions from a little evidence, but a look at Ray's family offers at least a good hypothesis for explaining his behavior. His only sibling, Charles, is seventeen, a high school senior, and Ray's idol. He is an all-state guard on the high school football team, and while he is not a more illustrious student than Ray, he is being courted by several college scouts. He plans to try whichever of the colleges offers him the best financial deal; then, if he doesn't make the grade academically (which is probable), he will switch to professional play. If he continues to grow, the latter is probably a realistic choice.

The boys' father has a sixth-grade education, runs a small service station, and seems to realize most of his life satisfaction from Charles' athletic prowess. He basks in the reflected glory of his older son's publicity, and pushes Ray to be "just as big a success." Neither of the parents attends school functions, and efforts to interest them in helping Ray have met with disinterest.

Since everything in Ray's experience—his admired brother, his own baseball success, his parents' urging—promises rewards for athletic



participation, it is not surprising that he focuses his energies on securing more rewards in this field. Academic work, already providing experiences of failure, seems to offer no more promise for the future. With this condition existing, there is little reason to expect a change unless some new phenomenon enters the picture.

To say that Ray is unmotivated is false. He is highly motivated and expends a great deal of energy in trying to reach his goal. The problem is that his motives and goals are different from those the school and his teachers wish to encourage.

## Sources of Needs and Motives

Which is the most important need, which is next, and next, and so on? This question (called "hierarchy of needs" in many discussions) can be answered for rats and speculated about for human beings. To the classroom teacher it probably doesn't matter much whether rats respond more to thirst than to hunger. What does matter is what is driving the third boy in the second row to spend his energy in getting attention instead of in learning cooperatively with others. To understand him and his classmates, it is desirable to look for the source of motives.

One obvious source lies in the physiology of the person. To maintain life and produce energy, the body must be supplied with food, fluid, and suitable temperature, must have adequate rest, must eliminate waste, and the like. In our culture these needs are likely to be in the background most of the time, but deprivation will bring them quickly to the fore. They are sometimes called "basic" or "primary," because denial of them is virtually impossible due to the body's tremendous will to survive. (Not completely impossible, though; else we would have no martyrs and fewer heroes!)

In a World War II study, conscientious objectors voluntarily submitted to near-starvation diets. As their hunger increased, their interest in nonfood aspects of life decreased. Sex, religion, affairs of the day were supplanted as subjects of conversation and fantasy by food. Gradually, they drifted into isolation and lethargy. Character or personality changes occurred, too: although these volunteers were highly moral and religious men, hoarding and even theft of food occurred. (Keyes, Brozek, *et al.*, 1952)

In reading education texts written in the middle 1930's, one is struck by the frequent mention of children whose poor school performance, or absence from school, was attributed to near starvation, homes too cold for sleep, or lack of shoes to walk the icy streets to school. The last three decades have seen such an improvement in economic and social conditions that the average teacher seldom sees a child for whom neither family nor public welfare can provide the necessities. Note the word "can." There will always be some children whose families or guardians, through ignorance or disinterest, fail to care for them adequately. In one large city school system, the teachers of an elementary school in one of the "best" neighborhoods had to plead for help from the school administration to provide milk or some sort of lunch in the morning. There were so many absentee or sleeping mothers, so many careless servants, or so little parent-child interaction that a sizeable percentage of the students ate, at best, one fair-to-good meal a day—and that in the evening. They came to school usually without breakfast and spent their liberal lunch allowances on candy or ice cream. The school had no lunch program. There was real evidence of malnourishment—sleeping, inattention, a few cases of fainting. It goes without saying that these children were poor scholars.

While the above situation may be (hopefully) rare, it does exist, and probably always will. Teachers in some poor districts, of course, are constantly aware of the problem. The point is that when physical needs are unsatisfied, others will get little attention.

At the opposite pole from the life-sustaining needs are those which are purely social, purely learned. It should be emphasized that the fact that they are *learned* does not render them less powerful than those which are physiologically based. Remember our martyrs, our life-sacrificing heroes.

Such needs as those for achievement (as in the case of Ray), for acquisition of such goods as trophies or money, and for social status and the like are well-nigh universal in our culture, but the resulting motives take different forms according to the circumstances within which they have been acquired. Social class, age, sex, intelligence—all the myriad factors of individual difference—tend to produce the unique pattern of motives in a given child.

The child acquires not only motives, but approved ways of satisfying them. A ten-year-old middle-class girl loses no social status by refusing to fight physically with another hostile girl. Her lower-class male classmate cannot *avoid* a threatened battle if he is to retain his status in his group. Thus, any list of learned needs, or any attempt to rank them, will be incomplete and inaccurate for a given individual, however true for the generality.

Between life-sustaining and purely social needs lie those which are physiological in origin but so structured and modified by learning that they cannot be considered apart from the culture in which they occur. Sex is perhaps the best example here. While sex as a need does not play a major role in child life, as it does in adolescence, childhood sexuality does exist. The reader might infer from most books about children that sex is scarcely apparent to preschoolers, takes the form of awareness of and hostility toward the opposite sex through childhood, and then suddenly bursts into bloom at pubescence. It would seem more likely that there exists slowly growing sexual feelings throughout childhood and an early flowering of this feeling with pubescent glandular changes. In many children the feeling is repressed, or at least unexpressed. In others, for reasons both social and biological, it is expressed. Any experienced teacher recognizes the seductive behavior of some little girls and the aggressiveness of some young boys, knows of occasional problems of exhibitionism, mutual masturbation, or other more advanced sex play. But more of this later.

The need for love, affection, or simply "belongingness" lies also in this in-between area. As will be seen in a later chapter, there is some evidence for the existence of an inherent (or at least very early) demand for someone to cling to, to be cherished by. Learning experiences determine the "who," "how," and "how much," so that in one culture a whole host of "mothers" is apparently satisfactory to the young, while in another culture only one person will do. Again, an innate (or at least very early) need is structured or focused by social learning.

Without doubt, the motives of greatest concern to the teacher are the social or learned ones, because they determine to a great extent the child's attitude toward school and his willingness to channel his energy into academic work.

## Motives in School

The child enters school, then, with a number of needs to satisfy. He will be motivated—that is, he will release or use his energy in whatever ways seem most likely to him to satisfy these needs—in the momentary order of greatest to least importance.

When a youngster starts to school for the first time, he is almost sure to be a little uneasy, a little unsure of how he will be treated. He hopes no physical harm will come to him; he hopes someone like his mother will be nice to him. He is also curious. He wonders what the new experience will be like: Will it be fun? What will he learn to do? Will the other kids play with him? Thus, early school experience is likely to center around relieving whatever fears the child may bring with him: nobody does hurt him, the teacher is nice, the kids can be fun, and so on. Only when these and other physical and affectional needs are satisfied can he channel his energies into new and novel tasks.

Little Jean started kindergarten before her fifth birthday but within the allowable time prescribed by the school. She was not much larger than the average three-and-a-half-year-old child. Her speech was somewhat retarded and babyish. Her mother, who brought her to the first class, was somewhat older than most of the other mothers, appeared to be intelligent and well educated, but seemed somewhat cold and precise both with Jean and with the teacher. Jean was the couple's only child.

When her mother started to leave, Jean clung to her and tried to go along, like some of the other beginners. Her mother left with the others despite the tears. Unlike the rest, however, Jean did not accept the new situation. She continued to cry, or simply sit by herself away from the group, occasionally sniffing or crying.

Although she lived not far from the school, her mother had to bring her to the schoolroom each day and forcibly detach herself. The other children in the class soon began to taunt and laugh at the "cry-baby." At no time would she participate in the activities of the group.

Here we have an example of a child whose needs for physical safety and affection have not been met to her satisfaction. The phrase "to her satisfaction" is important. It is not so much whether the motives are satisfied in reality, but whether the person *perceives* them as being met. That no physical harm occurred, and that the teacher attempted to show friendliness and



affection, was irrelevant at the moment, because the situation *felt* hostile and fearsome to Jean.

There is probably no more difficult task in the realm of human relations than that of sharing someone else's perception of an experience or situation. To an adult it is ridiculous for a child to fear going into a dark storage closet for some paste. The adult "knows" there is nothing harmful there. The child "knows" it too—the teacher has demonstrated the absence of threat by lighting the area with a flashlight. But what he knows and what he feels—that is, perceives emotionally—are two different things.

To complete the case above:

The situation did not improve, so it was necessary for Jean's parents to remove her from school. On the advice of the kindergarten teacher and the principal, her mother attempted to broaden the child's experience of other persons and places. After a time, Jean was enrolled in a nursery school half-days. The following fall, when her growth had increased and her experience was greater, she was re-enrolled in the kindergarten, where her progress was normal and her relations with others good.

In the early years of school the materials and content of much of the work are intrinsically satisfying to the child. He cuts, pastes, molds, hears stories, acts them out in plays. When he begins to deal with the abstractions of words and numbers, what he is doing may be less immediately satisfying. This is especially true of the slower child, who may really not have a clear idea of what he is doing—who is getting little reinforcement or reward for his efforts.

What sustains his efforts when he is not succeeding or not getting much intrinsic satisfaction out of his efforts? One deep and thoroughly learned need operative here is the desire for approval and acceptance. At school-beginning age, most children have learned that "being a good child" means doing what grownups want done. When being in the good graces of parents and teachers is important, considerable effort will be expended on school work even if no other motive exists. This desire to please, or motivation to achieve, to maintain the good will of parents especially continues to be effective up into the college years for some young people.

Some parents and even teachers use affection—or threat of its withdrawal—as a kind of club to make the child work. And work

he does—sometimes. At other times the gambit fails and creates more and greater problems than academic failure. So much emotional tension gets mixed up with school work that success is impossible. The youngster may cheat to stave off the threat of failure and consequent loss of love. If success is beyond his grasp, he may throw up the battle and nullify the loss of affection by withdrawing his own.

In our culture, achievement and love are painfully intermixed. Sometimes children seem to be valued for their successes, not for themselves. Even dating, sexual, and marriage habits are highly competitive and "success" oriented. It is not surprising that love and acceptance are used to motivate children to study. But such powerful and complex motivation should be handled with care. The dangers of misuse are great. In addition to those mentioned above (heightened tension, cheating, withdrawal of affection) is the danger that the child will value or devalue himself in line with his "successes" or "failures," these being defined by his love objects, not by himself. Potential damage to his acceptance of reality, his self-acceptance, and his self-concept could be great.

Another nearly universal need in our culture is the desire to be thought well of, or to be valued by peers. It has been noted that the pleasing of parents and those parent-surrogates, the teachers, is highly important to most school beginners. The desire for status among his peers develops very quickly, if it is not present when the child begins his education. It is safe to say that by later childhood, especially, this motive is near the top for most children, and by adolescence it reaches a peak. This means that successful learning in the classroom is a somewhat social phenomenon: only if academic success is valued by the group that is important to the child will he channel a major part of his energies toward classroom achievement. Herein lies both a hazard and an opportunity for the teacher.

The hazard lies in the fact that in large segments of the society of children, learning is simply not valued. Not infrequently, the child is reflecting the value his parents and their larger society place on academic matters. Or for some reason—the influence of a popular and powerful child leader, perhaps—a small group within the class or perhaps most of the class rejects the values of the school. When this happens, the youngster who still wishes to learn and succeed is in a dilemma. He may choose belonging,

and suffer an academic slump. He may decide in favor of learning, and suffer the social consequences. Most likely he will compromise: do enough to get by, disclaim outwardly any ambition for achievement, and try to please both sides.

The low value placed on intellectual life in our culture has often been remarked upon by both foreign and domestic observers. Perhaps the intellect commands more respect at the moment than it has for some time past, at least among college people and the brighter high school students. How much of this increased value on learning has infiltrated the elementary school is problematical. Certainly the self-conscious scholar and pedant has generally been rejected by our larger society. Perhaps the reader remembers from her own childhood the reception granted the eager little boy or girl who was always first with the hand up, always eager to snicker at another's ignorance, always ready to correct the mistakes of others (including, sometimes, the teacher's). This child (usually a girl, in the author's experience) was a kind of horrible example for anyone tempted to show off his knowledge.

Then there is the child for whom the typical middle-class school material is simply irrelevant to his experience in life outside. The child from a foreign ethnic group, the child of a minority racial or religious group, the child of migrant fruit pickers—what does the school mean to him? Textbook pictures of clean children romping before cozy cottages or big homes, pictures of children nestled in loving parents' laps before the fire—what do they communicate to children who live in shacks, whose fathers are unknown, whose next address may be some institution? The failure rate in school is six times as high among elementary school children whose families earn under \$3,000 as among families earning \$9,000 or more. The drop-out rate is five times as great among these low-income families as it is among the high-income group. (Sexton, 1961)

In the years since World War II, a rising proportion of children from marginal and low-level homes has been enrolled in schools. The problem of meeting the needs of these children is national in scope and of growing concern. Obviously one teacher can accomplish little on her own. School and community must work together. A close relationship must be demonstrated between school and life, remedial services necessary for academic

progress must be instituted, and aspirations for growth must be aroused in the children.

A common problem of the teacher, especially a nice middle-class, genteely reared, inexperienced one, is this inability to perceive the meaning of what she teaches in the lives of children of vastly different experience from hers. One such child in a class will simply be lost, having little chance for status in the group anyway. An occasional one with some special appeal (physical ability or daring, for example), or several in a class, may become the arbiters of acceptance and impel otherwise ambitious children to avoid cooperating.

Not all social influence is negative, of course. Opportunity shines forth when a leader or high-status group of children find school pleasurable and learning satisfying. Then the rest of the children, wanting to be accepted by the high achievers, may bend their efforts in the same direction.

It is essential that the teacher know enough about the social relationships in her class to learn who is admired and emulated by the rest. In many cases, or perhaps most, there will be several groups in one class, with a few children accepted by none. The elementary teacher has an advantage in spending so many hours with the same children that she can discover the structure and relationships of the groups. Various sociometric techniques are useful here.<sup>2</sup> Efforts at improving motivation will be far more rewarding when leaders and peer groups are stimulated than when the effort is expended on the class as a whole or on individuals alone.

## Self-Esteem as Motive

Of greatest importance is the esteem in which the child holds himself. External pressures are great: the family "expects," the teacher "wants," the group "suggests" certain performance levels, but the child finally must determine for himself what level of achievement is adequate. His self-evaluation tells him how great

<sup>2</sup> For the teacher who does not know how to go about making a sociogram, the following book is recommended: *How to Construct a Sociogram* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, 1947).



this should, or can, be. Performance below this level becomes a blow to his own self-esteem.

His expectations are developed out of his own estimates of his competence, the centrality (or ego involvement, to use another term) of that competence, and the expressed opinions of others—teachers, peers, parents. In middle childhood, self-estimate of mental competence has been found to be fairly stable over time and highly related to the judgments of both peers and teachers. This is especially true for boys. In one study those boys with high self-concepts were generally effective in many school activities, especially academic ones. (Sears, 1960)

It may readily be inferred that teachers at every level should be both realistic and cautious in putting across their views of a particular child's competence. An exaggeratedly high estimate leads to frustration and consequent loss of motivation. A too-low estimate does not elicit the appropriate level of effort in the first place.

Sandy was the first of two children in a professor's family. He was raised "by the book," and his parents were determined that this intellectual climate should be the best. His early development was unexceptional, and his mother's early attempts to teach him to read (at three and a half years) were not productive. Otherwise the parents' efforts satisfied them. Sandy has been "hothouse" by deliberately being taught intelligence-test items. His father built some steps so that Sandy would not be handicapped by living in a stairless ranch house. In the college nursery school he tested well above average and was seen as an outstanding child. His large vocabulary (the result of hours of being read to out of children's dictionaries and educational books) impressed his teachers in kindergarten and first grade. By age eight, Sandy had developed the self-image of an extremely bright and talented boy. His Binet score at eight, however, was 108 IQ—adequate, but certainly inconsistent with his and others' expectations. (As we shall see later, hothousing on intelligence-test items can produce exaggerated early scores.)

By grade five Sandy was doing mediocre work and was the recipient of scolding, pleading, and cajoling by his parents and to some extent by his teacher, still convinced of his brightness on the basis of early school performance. His frustration and anxiety over his work caused his achievement to be actually below his only average capabilities. Finally he gave up trying, confused and depressed by his parents' and teachers' demands on him and by his failure to live up to and satisfy his own self-image.

Fortunately, at this point the school's competent guidance counselor was brought into the situation at the teacher's request. By talking with the boy and his parents, by examining school records, and by conducting some individual psychological testing, the counselor began to see the nature of the problem. Sandy was an average boy whose early success did not prepare him for his later failure to lead his class, as both he and the adults in his world expected him to do. With several sessions the counselor brought Sandy to the point where he not only understood the difficulty, but accepted it emotionally. The teacher very quickly saw the implications of the situation and bent her efforts toward helping the boy catch up on the work he had abandoned in his confusion. Relieved of some of the external pressures, Sandy began to learn and achieve at a better level than he had for some time.

The greatest difficulty lay in the parents' perception of their son. Their response to the counselor's analysis of Sandy was one of indignation; accepting their boy as "average" was apparently damaging to their own self-esteem. They promptly took the boy for assessment to a psychologist on the college staff; his analysis agreed substantially with that of the school. They reluctantly accepted—intellectually, at least—a more realistic view of the boy and eased their pressures on him somewhat.

## Increasing Academic Motivation

Little has been said of what many feel should be the basic motivation in school: the satisfaction the child gets out of *knowing*, and the appeal of learning itself. The need for exploration and curiosity satisfaction is sometimes neglected in discussions of motivation. It is, however, a very important aspect of behavior. As is true of much research in needs and motivation, basic research has been carried out with animals.

But anyone who has been followed around all day by a preschooler can attest to the tremendous inherent interest in things—in who, what, how, and why. "Why does a carrot grow down and a cabbage grow up?" "How do birds fly?" "Why don't airplanes flap their wings?" "Where does water come from?" From intensive studies of individual infants and children, the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget generalizes that inquisitive behavior is a dependable characteristic of the growing child. (Piaget, 1952)

While the pressures of learning to get along with others and to find a place in his world take some of the edge off a child's curiosity (and the experience of being rebuffed often), much of this

desire to know does remain, active or latent, in all children. Perhaps sometimes teachers try too hard to "dress up" learning, to pretend it is play, to sell it as something other than what it really is.

Many of us have been fortunate enough to have been students of great teachers (and they occur from kindergarten to graduate college), whose obvious deep and burning concern with "knowing" was somehow communicated to us, without soft soap or hard sell.

Perhaps the teacher would do well to sit down as she plans her lessons and ask, "Do I really feel that what I will teach tomorrow is vital, is exciting—that it should make some difference in someone's life?" The deep satisfaction which comes from learning cannot be communicated when the teacher herself does not deeply believe in it (or perhaps really feel or understand it).

No instructor can maintain a high level of excitement and dedication all the time, of course; both teachers and students would be exhausted. But the teacher who never feels, has never felt, the excitement of discovery—the "Aha, now I see it!" kind of experience—is failing an important and basic function: to help children find satisfaction in learning for its own sake. Such a teacher, too, is missing one of the greatest rewards of teaching: the joy and satisfaction she perceives and shares when "I couldn't see it, now I can" happens.

There are, finally, the vague, inchoate longings of the child—to be an astronaut, to see the world, to be a nurse, to do one thing and be one person today, and tomorrow something and somebody else. The elementary teacher, like the parent, has the privilege of stimulating and encouraging these dreams. She has, too, the necessity of not pinning too much on a child's momentary interest. To use a stimulating current event—a new space achievement, perhaps—as the springboard to a lesson or a project is fine and profitable. But reliance on fads, novelty, and "gimmicks" is not successful in the long run in helping children learn the things they need to know. For this there is no substitute for learning what the basic needs of a group of children are and structuring the classroom situation so that a majority of the pupils perceive that these needs are met. Some children in almost any group will remain unsatisfied. The teacher, administrator, and guidance worker will try to alleviate the situation; sometimes

remedy is possible, sometimes not. Unhappily, the teacher must admit, like the coach, that "You can't win 'em all."

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## 2

# Physical Characteristics and School Behavior

IT IS NOT always easy to communicate how important it is for a teacher to understand the physical status of children. Any parent or experienced elementary teacher knows how "physical" youngsters are, but many have difficulty in relating this knowledge to an understanding of behavior in the classroom and on the playground. Occasionally a teacher is found (more frequently it is a trainee who has had little experience with non-adults) who prefers to think of children as disembodied minds to be cultivated. This is wrong. Knowledge and awareness of the child's physical self is as vital to understanding him as a learner as it is to understanding him as a person.

To everyone, size, shape, appearance, energy, grace, and motor competence are matters of concern. In the society of children these are factors of major importance. Being bigger or smaller than classmates (not to mention adults), being skilled or awkward at games, being well or sick, fast or slow, attractive or homely—how much difference they make! If an adult is asked to recall some one day of his grade-school history, he may report some exciting intellectual experience, but he is even more likely to report some happy or perhaps painful playground (that is, physical) experience. Obviously, whoever works with children must be knowledgeable and aware of their physical ways.

Knowledgeable and aware of what, exactly? Of the facts about growth, of course; but more important, of what these facts mean both subjectively and objectively in the lives of children.



Matters of concern here are sex, size, growth rate, attractiveness, energy level, sensory functioning, health, and the like.

Of all human traits, with the possible exception of intelligence, the physical is probably the best documented. Early studies of individual development began to appear about the turn of the century. In the twenties and thirties great cross-sectional studies of development were made, leading to the publication of tables of averages and norms—"ought-to's," in effect: "If a child is eight years old, he ought to be so tall and so heavy." Implicit in this "ought-to" was the suggestion that if an eight-year-old was not this height and weight, something was wrong.

In many schools these norms were used to classify pupils into "healthy" and "unhealthy" groups. One popular approach was to measure and weigh each child, check his size against the charts, and then tie a tag on him for parental information and guidance. On the cards were various descriptive categories and blanks to be filled in. But the cards were colored, so a child's physical status was apparent to everyone. White was safe, indicating only minor difficulties or none at all. Blue was not good; something had been found amiss in the body. Red was for danger; immediate action was required, perhaps infected teeth or tonsils needed attention. A great many children were tagged with blue cards simply because they were, by inheritance, slight or stocky instead of "average." The distress occasioned by such public display of "differentness" may be imagined. The school's errors were two-fold: first, using cross-sectional<sup>1</sup> tables of averages to judge the appropriateness of an individual child's growth, and second, making a public display of its judgment.

As longitudinal<sup>1</sup> data began to accumulate in the thirties and

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps a word of explanation about the terms "cross-sectional" and "longitudinal" would be apropos here. The first method consists of gathering data by measuring or studying a number of different persons at each age of interest. For example, one might measure the height of three hundred different boys and girls aged six, another three hundred aged seven, and so on up the age scale. The longitudinal approach is to measure the *same* subjects repeatedly, over a period of time. That is, the three hundred six-year-olds mentioned above would be measured again when they were seven, again at eight, and so on. The latter method obviously takes many years—part of a lifetime—to complete. It has the advantage of making it possible to see individual peculiarities of development, which would be "averaged out" in the cross-sectional approach. Both methods are useful and have their special contributions to make.

forties, the tremendous individual variation in size and growth among healthy and normal children became apparent to anyone with access to the data. Growth charts based on these studies and taking body structure into account began to appear, making it possible for a child's growth to be charted in terms of its appropriateness for him, not on an arithmetical mean of children. (Baller and Charles, 1961, pp. 225-228)

It might be hoped, in view of the above, that the schools have gone beyond the comparison approach to physical development. Of course, children will always compare themselves to others, but this is not as devastating as having an "official" or school view put on display. The following recent occurrence suggests that the "display" still occurs.

Susan was in the fourth grade. She was an average student, liked school reasonably well, but was not particularly popular among the children of her class. After the Christmas holiday she began periodically faking illness with the obvious intent to stay home from school. Her attempts were transparent, however, and she was sent grumbling on her way. After school on these days she would sulk in her room at home, pick fights with her older sister, or on occasion simply cry alone and refuse to explain the cause. When this happened on three succeeding Wednesdays, Susan's mother decided it was time to visit the teacher. The teacher was unaware of the cause and could think of only one activity peculiar to Wednesday—a continuing health unit, which included a weekly weighing session. One child did the weighing, and another wrote the numbers on a large permanent chart in front of the room. The teacher's idea of course was to emphasize the importance of a good diet and even a remedial diet for overweight and thin children.

The problem suddenly stood revealed. Susan was a rapid grower—tall, big-boned, and somewhat overweight. She was taller than any child in the class, including boys, and was also the heaviest. Wednesday, then, became the day when she exhibited to everyone her self-perceived abnormality and suffered the cruel humor of childhood: "You're big as a cow! Look out, your desk will fall down!" and so on. Her big bones and rapid growth were inherent. It was true that she was overweight, but this was a matter that her family and physician were already working on. With the best of intentions, her teacher was making the child miserable, and to no good purpose.

The foregoing account suggests three things. First, absolute physical characteristics are important to the child. Second, the child's perception of himself is even more vital than the true sit-

uation. Third, both the true situation and the child's perception of it may affect his learning as well as his own adjustment.

## Some Growth Matters of Concern

### GENERAL GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS

Growth is most rapid in the preschool years; it proceeds at a decelerating rate from infancy onward. By school-beginning age (five or six) the average child has embarked on a relatively smooth part of the growth curve; that is, growth is steady, continuous, and regular. Upon seeing a three-year-old child after an absence of several months, the observer often feels impelled to say, "Can this be the same child? How she's changed! She looks so different that I almost failed to recognize her." Upon seeing a nine-year-old last observed at six or seven, the remark is more likely to be "My, how you've grown!" That is to say, the rate of change is more regular and consistent during these early school years.

The phrase "the average child" must be noted. A median or average implies a mid-point, and thus requires that half the group must be faster and half slower, or half taller and half shorter. While a majority of children will be clustered fairly closely about such an average, there will be several in any group far ahead and several far behind. While being "different" generally exacts some penalties in the peer culture, the slowest growers probably have the worst of it among school beginners. Actual size is of vital importance, and motor development tends to follow the same path as general growth. The kindergarten-elementary teacher should be alert to social problems stemming from differentness in growth rate. The cases of Susan and Jean (Chapter 1) are illustrative.

Among a quite normal six-year-old group, the range in height may be more than ten inches, with proportional or greater weight differences. Some of this difference in body frame is simply genetic in origin, but much of it is due to differing growth rates (these too have genetic origins, of course) and consequent different levels of *general* physical maturity.

Instead of decreasing with age, the differences increase into

late childhood and early adolescence. By age twelve, the height range will have increased to about fifteen inches. The tallest six-year-old could be the same height as the shortest twelve-year-old in the same school! While there are many pro-and-con arguments on ungraded schools, they undoubtedly have some advantage in mixing pupils of different chronological ages, thus providing some opportunity for children to associate at least sometime during the day with physical peers regardless of chronological age. There is no valid reason, of course, why graded schools cannot also provide some mixing of age groups for certain activities, so that children will have an opportunity to know and interact with persons somewhat like themselves in development. To be always the smallest child in the group may result in frustration leading either to withdrawal or aggression; being always the largest may encourage bossiness or even bullying.

Size and growth rate are related to intelligence in a minor way; there is some tendency for brighter children to be faster growers. But this tendency is slight, may simply be an expression in part of social-class status (and therefore of diet and medical care), and is not marked enough to be predictive in individual cases. But it should be emphasized that the tendency is in the direction of bigness for the bright, not the dull. The old stereotype of "big, dumb . . ." perhaps had its inception in the custom of "keeping back" slow learners, so that after two or three failures they would indeed be big in comparison to classmates, being some years older! Conversely, bright children, being accelerated, might be thought of as puny because they are some years younger than many children in the same grade, though normal in size for their age.

### SEX DIFFERENCES

The difference between sexes in growth rate is well known. By age six, girls are on the average already several months advanced in growth over boys, and the disparity increases with age; by early pubescence the female is about two years advanced. In late childhood or early adolescence, girls are on the average actually taller for a time than boys (though not stronger). It is possible that this embarrassing—to both sexes—state of affairs contrib-

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utes to the cleavage of the sex groups in the upper elementary grades. Of course, there are other and more cogent reasons for this separation.

### ATTRACTIVENESS

Since beauty "lies in the eyes of the beholder," as the poet says, there can be no standard descriptions or scales to use in evaluation. While much is known about the effect of growth on achievement, social relations, personality, and the like, almost nothing can be said with certainty about beauty or its lack. It is hard to believe that physical attractiveness has no measurable effect on behavior: Do attractive persons flourish because they are highly accepted? Do they fail to use their abilities because they can get by on looks? Is attractiveness more important to females than to males? Is it ever a handicap to be noticeably pretty? The research literature does not say.

There is a noticeable change in attractiveness during the grade-school years. School beginners still have some of the roundness, the soft look of babyhood, about them. This, coupled with small and shining white baby teeth and fine-textured hair, gives them an appealing look; even a homely child of this age may be judged "cute" in appearance. By late childhood the front baby teeth are gone and have been replaced with adult-sized incisors, giving a toothy look to the face. Limbs are much longer in proportion to the trunk and generally appear bony or skinny, except in overweight youngsters. Fortunately, neither boys nor girls seem overly interested in their appearance during these years of transition. Reasonable attention to neatness and cleanliness is about all that can be hoped for. Adolescent preoccupation with appearance will come soon enough!

Of greater concern to the child than beauty or attractiveness is the sex appropriateness of his or her appearance. There is a cultural stereotype of maleness and femaleness of physique which most growing persons hold before them as models of personal adequacy. Especially in the upper grades, when some children are moving into pubescence and others are still firmly based in childhood, may nature fail to satisfy individual ambitions. The boy may remain soft-skinned, with fair cheeks and softly rounded limbs, when he would like to be hard and lean. The girl may re-



main bony, hard-muscled, and lank-haired when she really wants to be curved and cuddly.

The reaction of the boy to his own feminine prettiness, or the girl to her masculine hardness, is unpredictable, because more than just appearance is involved. What has been rewarded, ignored, or punished by parents, other adults, and peers? What kind of models has the child had? What is the self-perceived image?

## THE TEACHER'S ROLE

While most children may seem to exhibit little overt concern over physical status, some are obviously struggling with problems generated by their own differentness. Perceptive teachers and guidance workers are aware that many other youngsters are secretly concerned about these matters. What can the teacher do to alleviate growth problems?

As suggested earlier, the least she can do is to avoid making a classroom issue of the sizes of her children. There are better ways of promoting health than by public measurement! On the positive side, much can be done in the variously titled "health" or "growth" units taught through the grades. The nature and extent of the range of individual growth can be emphasized. Evaluative terms and dichotomies such as "good-poor," "healthy-unhealthy," and the like should be avoided wherever possible. From the teacher's general attitude and approach to all topics—not just the physical—should come the feeling that being a unique and separate individual is really an important matter. In the social-studies area, favorable attention is usually given to different races and cultures; why not make it clear that *within* the child's own culture group are great differences which are acceptable too? Obviously, the teacher is not going to make a very big dent in our culture's current fascination with being like everyone else, but at least she may make it a little easier for her children to accept themselves and others as they are.

She must be alert, of course, to symptoms of physical anomaly and malfunction, which should be referred to the school health officers and the child's own family. Any child who is seriously concerned about his physical status should have the advantage of medical and psychological counseling.

Helping a child learn an appropriate sex role is a delicate matter, especially if the youngster is handicapped by appearance. Suggestions are frequently made about the necessity of good masculine and feminine models for the youngsters to pattern themselves after. This is important, but it is also important to avoid stereotypes. After all, it is possible, especially in an urban culture such as ours, to be a quite satisfactory male without being brawny and bearded, able to cut down a tree with six flicks of the axe, and seven feet tall! Or one can be a satisfactory female without looking and dressing like a *femme fatale* of the movies. The point is that the child needs to perceive a range of sex-appropriate characteristics and behaviors, not just a narrow and rigid ideal which, by its "idealness," may seem impossible of attainment. Failures to help children learn their appropriate sex roles probably cause no greater problems (may even cause lesser ones) than the promotion of stereotypes which the child perceives as impossible to imitate because of his own characteristics and limitations.

## The Child's Energy

While little research evidence exists, anyone who works closely with children must recognize energy level as a prime determiner of behavior. While diet, health, and living conditions in general obviously affect energy, the basis for it is "built in." Variation between children begins to be exhibited in the crib, and marked differences are apparent in early childhood. By school age the child has developed a level and style of energy supply and release which soon becomes one of his recognizable personal traits.

The child with a very high energy supply differs from his more passive classmate in many ways. He is probably awake more hours. He "gets around" more, thus contacting a greater number of persons and encountering more situations. He has a greater number of opportunities for learning certain kinds of things—and perhaps more chances to get into trouble.

Except where it is truly abnormal and results from illness or malfunction, energy level does not change much as a result of external pressures. Attempts to slow down the highly active or to

goad the sluggish into activity will probably stir up a lot of emotion—and not much else. It is the teacher's task rather to provide a variety of channels for the high-energy children to use in making effective use of their capacities, and to see that the more limited energy of those at the other end of the continuum is used most efficiently in school work and play and not frittered away futilely.

Again excepting pathological cases, it should be noted that there is no known relationship between basal metabolism and intelligence, and that "high" and "low" energy levels are neither good nor bad per se. Like growth patterns in general, they exist naturally, they influence behavior, and they require consideration in planning for, or working with, any child.

## FATIGUE

Regardless of energy supply, fatigue in school is a problem for many children, especially in the first two or three grades. Some of the less mature youngsters will miss the nap they have been taking (under protest, no doubt!) at home in the afternoon. Other, more vigorous boys and girls who haven't napped for years will also show signs of fatigue in the afternoon. Part of the cause is simply that the children have been working for what is for them a long, hard day. This is especially true of those suburban and country children who have come considerable distances by bus or automobile. Another and equally potent cause is the steady and not-yet-accustomed pressure to conform to the demands of the teacher and to get along with (or, even worse, to have trouble getting along with) the other children. Many, perhaps most, young children are under great pressure to succeed in school. These pressures may be self-stimulated and a product of a particular personality structure, or they may result from a demanding and perfectionistic home atmosphere, or some combination of the two. Obviously, this kind of motivation can be the source of high achievement and success. But it will lead to tension and thus to fatigue.

The teacher will come to know the signs of tiredness and will deal with them. Some children will almost visibly wilt and become lethargic and unresponsive. Others will become irritable, quarrelsome, and inefficient. There is no sure remedy other than

just a little more maturity, but there are palliative measures. Most daily programs are planned—or should be—with short periods and with unlike activities following each other. In the first two or three grades, especially, the schedule should be flexible enough so that the teacher can adapt and adjust the day's work to the state of her pupils' energy. The need for periods of exercise, as well as relaxation, cannot be overstressed in planning for an efficient and comfortable day's work.

In the middle and upper grades there should not be much of a fatigue problem, except on some especially stressful days when examinations are given or something of this sort occurs. When a child in these higher grades gives evidence of chronic excessive tiredness, the teacher should encourage a medical check.

If a given class rather habitually is cranky, quarrelsome, inefficient late in the day, and in general is exhibiting signs of fatigue, the teacher should review her own conduct to be sure she is not being excessively demanding or perfectionistic and thus generating anxiety in the students. This anxiety, which will be discussed in greater detail later, is a diffuse and pervasive kind of fear which produces a stirred-up state resulting in tension, fatigue, or other undesirable symptoms.

## Sensory Functioning

The teacher need have little concern about the sense-organ functioning of the great majority of children. Efficiency is generally quite good at school-beginning age, and reaches a peak ordinarily in the later years of grade school. Regular examination of vision and hearing should insure maintenance of high-level functioning. But the "great majority" leaves out some children, and regular checks are not routine in many families and schools. Thus the teacher must be vigilant for signs of deficiency.

Some of the clues to visual trouble are familiar—squinting, shutting one eye, mispronouncing words, and complaints of headache. But not always do such symptoms appear. Faulty vision may simply be accepted as normal, since the child has no standard for comparison. One grown-up woman with a history of childhood myopia reports, "I was twelve before I knew that *pictures* ever appeared on the wall. I supposed everyone saw blobs



of color without form as I did." At twelve, she more or less fortuitously had an eye examination, revealing her condition. The only *sure* way to spot such difficulties is through regular examinations, either home- or school-sponsored.

Hearing deficiencies are even less likely to be spotted than visual ones. Typical symptoms are cupping the hand back of one ear, turning the head to favor the "good" ear, and frequently calling for repetition. But the most frequent concomitant of partial deafness is the appearance of stupidity. At first the child tries, but he misses assignments and explanations, he gets left out of games and fun because he isn't sure what is going on, he is scolded for not minding the teacher. So after a time he retreats into a private world and sits dull-eyed in the classroom, lost to the outside world. Or, in his frustration, he lashes out at those around him and becomes a problem. Again, the only reasonable procedure is regular examination and medical help for those who need it.

## Motor Competence and Style

Motor control characterizes the child as much as does his over-all growth and size. That is, great individual differences exist at every age; these differences are largely, though not entirely, inherent, and they influence both learning and adjustment.

Motor skills are required in almost every context in the child's life. There are the large-muscle skills used in walking, running, ball-throwing, and the like. There are the fine-muscle skills demanded in tying shoes, drawing and writing, shooting marbles, and handling small toys or models. Actually, most skills require an effective combination of large and fine muscle control. It is convenient to think "large and fine," however, because of the sequence of acquiring control.

The developmental direction of neural control of muscles is cephalo-caudal (head to tail) and proximo-distal (center of body outward). Thus, in early life, arm control arrives before leg control, and hand-wrist control before finger control. In the first two or three grades this directional process is still apparent, especially in the marked differences in maturity between children. While all can walk and run reasonably well (but some cannot skip), not



all have enough control to throw a ball accurately. While some can control their fingers well enough to draw circles, squares, and curlicues—and thus are ready to learn to print—others seem nearly hopeless at such tasks.

Two facts should be kept clearly in mind by the teacher in these early years. One is that maturation is the prime factor in the appearance of motor competencies. Until there is an appropriate level of maturity, practice is futile and, if pressed, will stir negative emotions which may hinder later learning. Cajoling or scolding will avail nothing. The teacher in the lower grades can expect to teach the same skills again and again as individual children develop their readiness to learn, or she can wait until most are ready and teach the laggards later. Deciding on the "right" time is part science (through the use of readiness tests of various sorts) and part art, acquired by experience and observation.

A second important fact is that there is a relatively low relationship between large- and fine-muscle skills—indeed, between different individual skills in general. There is both warning and challenge in this specificity. The warning: knowing a child's level of motor performance in one area (such as running or jumping) tells us almost nothing about his level in some other aspect of motor competence (such as drawing or printing). The challenge: immaturity or incompetence in one motor skill does not necessarily imply the same lack in some other, different skill. It follows that, in teaching motor skills in middle childhood, a maximum concern must be exercised for individual maturation rates in each type of skill, and each child should have an opportunity to try out as many kinds of skills as possible.

The classroom teacher in the upper grades is usually somewhat less concerned with motor skills, unless she is involved with subjects such as art or physical education. Differential maturation rates are still influential but have less impact on behavior than earlier, since all the normal students will have acquired the basic shoe-tying, ball-throwing, and writing skills. Differences between students in the various types of motor competence will continue to increase, partly from genetic causes and partly from practice-induced learning.

Another facet of motor behavior might be called "style," as

distinguished from competence. The word connotes more than it denotes: Is the youngster under consideration habitually quick or slow in response? Is he graceful or clumsy? Are his movements smooth or jerky? When someone's ways—those of a pupil or friend, for instance—become familiar, it is easy to identify the person even at a considerable distance, or even from the back, simply by the way he swings his arms, bobs his head, or turns out his toes.

This personal "style" is largely the product of structure and neural functioning, and is thus more built-in than learned, although learning does play some part. A characteristic so much a part of total personality is subject to little alteration, even though considerable effort may be expended to effect change. After one of the author's lectures, a mother asked, "Please tell me what to do with my eight-year-old girl. She dawdles! We'll be about done with a meal, and she's just getting started. We'll be in the car ready to go somewhere, and she's just putting on her socks. She has to be started for school fifteen minutes early to get there when the other children in the neighborhood do. And she's just the same in school; the teacher says everyone will have finished an assignment except my girl. When it's done, it's good, but she hardly ever has time to finish anything. And the doctor says her health is fine."

Then the mother added a most revealing statement, with a sigh: "And my husband's just like her. It takes him forever to get himself going and get anything done."

One can imagine some of the stresses that have developed in this home shared by the "quicks" and the "slows."

These same quicks and slows share every classroom, as do the graceful and clumsy and the neat and the sloppy. What is to be done? A little teaching and a lot of adjusting. That is, quicker, more efficient ways of doing things may be taught to the slow, as well as more attention to detail and concern for correctness to the hurried. Flexibility in time for work completion can be instituted. Neatness can be encouraged, and order required. But the basic individual style will not change much, and nagging and scolding will add nothing but emotion to the situation. Much of this uniqueness must simply be endured when it cannot be enjoyed.

## The Onset of Pubescence

While the major concern of this book is with elementary school *children*, it must be observed that the elementary school also contains many *adolescents*. While the median age for onset of pubescence is something like twelve years for girls and fourteen for boys, some girls reach the menarche as early as nine or so, and a few boys begin their pubescent changes only a little later.

The effect of early maturing on boys and girls has been studied quite extensively. While generalization here is somewhat risky, it can be said that early pubescence may be advantageous for a boy, but more of a problem for a girl. (Mussen and Jones, 1962)

Teachers in the upper grades should inform themselves about the characteristics of early adolescent behavior, and be prepared to help the youngsters deal with the stresses of early maturation. (See, for example, Horrocks, 1962; Farnham, 1952.)

Little attention, at least of a research nature, has been directed to the influence of one or more early maturers on a class which is otherwise composed of children. In the absence of guidelines from scientific study, the teacher should be alert for unhealthy sexual stimulation of the less mature children, too much physical or social dominance by the adolescent, and similar problems. Helping the early maturers find physical and social peers with whom he (or, more likely, she) can interact is probably the best solution for both the individual and the rest of the group.

The above is not meant to imply that the early maturer is somehow dangerous; it is simply to urge that the needs of the majority group of children, as well as those of the unique individual, be dealt with.

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# 3

## Children's Abilities

SINCE THE PRINCIPAL CONCERN of this book is the child as a learner, some discussion of his abilities is vital. The subject of intelligence has been one of continuing and major interest to psychologists since the turn of the century. It is ironic, therefore, to observe how much ignorance and—perhaps worse—misinformation abounds on this topic. Teachers especially are guilty of offenses in this context: the IQ is thought on the one hand to be immutable, unchangeable, and an index to a child's whole future life, and on the other hand to be useless and indicative of nothing. Personal characteristics such as motivation are regarded as completely adequate substitutes for ability—or else pointless and irrelevant. Intelligence tests, good, bad, and indifferent, are regarded with attitudes ranging from near reverence to complete scorn. (The author once taught in a small school in which the superintendent had teachers administer intelligence tests, which he then personally scored and locked in a safe. They were not seen again by any eye other than his own!)

Some of the confusion about ability admittedly derives from disagreement among the experts. There is more than one widely accepted theory about the nature or structure of intelligence, and thus several viewpoints about the value of particular tests. Evidence on the stability of intelligence is somewhat varied, but is more widely agreed upon than formerly. Disagreement is profound on the origin and early development of ability. Much of the difficulty, of course, stems from the use—or rather misuse—of tests by well-intentioned but ignorant and untrained persons.

All of this is by way of warning and introduction to a topic which lends itself to the misinterpretation of varied data, to se-



lection of evidence to suit a point of view, and to wishful thinking. Since this is the case, the thoughtful student should read widely on the various aspects of human ability and be wary of arriving too soon at firm conclusions.

What knowledge and understanding is useful to the teacher? First, she should be able to distinguish between a youngster's capacity or potential and his present and probable future achievement. She should learn to recognize the manifestation of the several levels of abilities and to develop some idea of how to work with them. She should have some notion of the degree to which short-term and long-term plans can be made—*should* be made—at different ages and levels. She should be aware of how a child perceives and thinks. Finally, she should recognize some of the ways in which creativity manifests itself in children.

## Capacity to Learn

Capacity to learn or profit from experience is what is usually meant when the term "intelligence" is used. Furthermore, this experience is usually assumed to be of the academic, classroom type. It is important, therefore, in discussing these human characteristics, to specify whether ability in general or, specifically, "book learning" is the topic. Rather more is known about the latter than about the former. The antecedents or origins of ability—heredity and experience—are generally agreed upon, but not the relative importance of each, or the way in which they interact.

### HEREDITY

Quite obviously, the seat of intelligence is the brain and central nervous system. This is a structure, somewhat predisposed to function in certain ways, which, like all bodily structures, is a product of heredity. A great number of studies of ability in persons of varying genetic relationship, reared apart and together, attest to the genetic determination of intelligence.

### EXPERIENCE

The role of stimulation and experience should not be underestimated. Deprivation of early experience rather clearly leads to

retardation, temporary or permanent. A high level of appropriate stimulation leads to optimum development. There are psychologists, but probably a minority, who see stimulation as the *primary* factor in development of abilities. (Hunt, 1961) Whatever the relative role of stimulation, it is clear that the *preschool* years are the vital ones. Thus, by the time most youngsters arrive in school, they are pretty much what they are going to be intellectually, and it is the teacher's task to make the most of what is already present.<sup>1</sup>

### ORGANIZATION OF ABILITY

Not only is a general *level* of intelligence present in the school-age child, but there is also a personal, unique, individual pattern or *structure* of intelligence. It is readily apparent even to a layman that two persons—say a brother and sister—of approximately equal general ability may differ greatly in the way they think, approach problems, and come to solutions. Even with motivation and background held constant, marked differences appear. This uniqueness in mental operations may be thought of, in a way, as an aspect of personality, so pervasive is it in behavior.

Since the late 1930's, psychologists have been attempting to "map" the dimensions of ability through a statistical operation known as factor analysis. Up to fifty more-or-less independent factors have appeared in various analyses. One of the leaders in this exploration, J. P. Guilford, sees five major groups of intellectual abilities:

1. Cognition—meaning discovery, rediscovery, or recognition.
2. Memory—the retention of what is cognized.
3. Divergent thinking—searching or seeking for variety.
4. Convergent thinking—finding the best or conventional answer.
5. Evaluation—judging the correctness or adequacy of what is known and produced.

From his data he also classifies the intellectual factors according to the kind of material or content involved: figural, symbolic, or semantic. (Guilford, 1959) Such an analysis seems realistic in light of personal experience and observation.

<sup>1</sup> There is a considerable research literature on the sources of ability. For a fairly technical but readable report on heredity, see Burt, 1958. A comprehensive review of literature may be found in Jones, 1954. A briefer and less technical review is that of McCandless, 1952.

At this point it would be desirable to refer to a test or test battery which would tell the teacher, in concrete scores, about the structure of intellect of her students. Unfortunately, such tests are usable only in the laboratory at this point. Attempts to develop factor tests of ability which have predictive validity and which would be useful in school situations have not yet met with much success. The point of this discussion is therefore simply to alert the teacher to what she has perhaps already assumed: the *way* a child's abilities are organized is about as important as the *level* at which he functions. Whether this structure or organization is genetic in origin or the product of early experience is simply not known. It is one more fascinating problem to be explored and answered in the future.

## Achievement

There is more to learning than having capacity or aptitude. Every teacher knows the student of good, even exceptional, ability who seldom rises above mediocrity or even failure. She surely knows, too, some child of quite limited abilities who consistently does better than could be expected. Why?

Part of the answer lies in the organization of his abilities. But achievement consists of capacity *plus*. Plus what? Primarily, motivation, readiness, and appropriate learning experiences.

## MOTIVATION

The place of motivation in learning was discussed in an earlier chapter. Unfortunately, motivation is frequently neither of the kind nor in the amount desired by the teacher. But even if abilities are good and motivation is optimum, other favorable conditions must exist for efficient learning.

## READINESS

This is an important concept. As the term suggests, there is a best or appropriate time for a child to learn a specific thing quickly, easily, and efficiently. This "appropriate time" comes when his physical, neural, intellectual, social, and emotional de-

velopment has advanced enough to enable him to perceive the problem and to solve it with relative ease. Involved also are his experiential background and the method of teaching.

It is clear from a half-century of research that attempting to teach anything before an adequate level of readiness has been developed is inefficient at best and harmful at worst.

This concept of readiness would seem so simple and obvious as to be not controversial and to require only implementation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Take one subject—reading—as an example. When should instruction begin—preschool, kindergarten, first grade, or second? Educational psychologists usually fix mental age about six and one-half as an efficient age for beginning; in chronological terms, that would be in about the middle of grade one for the average child.

But one school administrator reacts thus, castigating “experts” in a discussion entitled “The Enchanted Maturation Level”:

Then there was kindergarten. The slightest hint of formal instruction in this preserve of nose blowing and toilet training caused every primary supervisor within a radius of five hundred miles to swarm to the attack like so many maddened barracuda. I almost hate to bring it up here, but recently certain institutions which shall remain discreetly nameless have actually been teaching kindergartners to *read*. Well! When I read *that* one, my head swam, my eyes lifted involuntarily to Heaven, and I waited numbly for the Second Coming.<sup>2</sup>

Can kindergartners learn to read? If they can, why wait a year or more to begin instruction? The following two cases may illuminate the problem somewhat:

Mary, aged four plus a couple of months, and Susan, not quite three, were the very superior daughters of a professor in a small college. Their mother, a gifted musician, hired a housemaid and spent almost all her time tutoring and coaching the little girls. Mary picked out tunes on the piano, using some chords. Both girls sang and talked in couplets and longer verses of some artistic merit. Most impressive was the performance of the children in reading. They would trudge across campus to the children's reading room of the library, where Mary, using the simplified card file, would pick out (and sign for) books for both, which they would then carry home and read. Susan read books typically used at the end of first grade or the beginning of second, and Mary's skills were equal to many books ordinarily read at about grade three or four. The mother was concerned about their fu-

<sup>2</sup> Rafferty, Max, *Suffer, Little Children*. New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1962, p. 47.



ture school experiences. Later, the family moved to a large city, where the girls were enrolled in a school for gifted children.

Should reading instruction begin in kindergarten for such children? The case of Bob presents another facet of the problem.

At age thirteen, Bob was in the eighth grade of a rural consolidated school. Reading instruction began in kindergarten in this institution. Bob's widowed mother was somewhat concerned about his school work and about his probable performance in the high school he would attend the next year. His grades were mediocre, but the school evinced no particular concern over him. His mother's concern was well founded: he was completely illiterate. He could print his name but no more. He often carried about a comic book which he would look at in the hope that others would think he could read.

A psychologist consulted by the mother found the boy's IQ to be in the mid-eighties. While not a very impressive level of ability, it is high enough to permit reading and writing, with suitable instruction. (Indeed, persons with abilities much lower than this can learn some functional reading and writing.) But by the time Bob was ready to learn to read, his class was far past the beginning stage, and so he was lost.

Since the school had neither interest in the student nor remedial facilities, the mother moved to a nearby city where the boy could get help. Here he did acquire some literacy, although with considerable difficulty due to his long history of frustration and the demands put upon him by his inappropriate grade status.

Should reading instruction begin in kindergarten for such children?

The answer in both cases would have to be "no." But this only emphasizes the first question: When *should* instruction begin? The ideal answer, of course, would be, "When each child is ready, begin teaching him." In private schools with highly restricted and limited enrollment this could be done. But what about our national pride and problem, the great public school whose aim is to educate everyone? Not every family, unlike those of the children above, can or would wish to move to provide adequate education for their children. Most citizens probably would feel that adequate education ought to be available where the family is, not somewhere else.

The solution to the readiness problem generally has been to find some kind of mid-point of readiness, start at this age, and devil (or remedial classes) take the hindmost, and underachievement take the foremost. Ungraded elementary classes, speed-up sections, remedial classes, and the like are all attempts at allevia-



tion. Each has something to offer, but no pat solution has yet been found for reading or any other subject.

It is safe to predict that no one solution will be found. The discussion above concerned primarily intellectual readiness. Add to this all the other kinds of inherent and acquired differences in individual readiness, and it is easy to see that the problem is terribly complex.

Researchers in education concern themselves with the topic of readiness. Recent studies of the cognitive process have led to explorations of new ways of presenting ideas, skills, and abstractions to children in ways which seem to encourage understanding and mastery at a much earlier stage of development than has been thought possible.<sup>3</sup> Automated instruction may help to provide some of the flexibility needed in dealing with individual readiness. Administrative techniques are constantly under trial.

It is most probable, however, that the burden of adjusting content and teaching techniques to individual levels of readiness will continue to fall most heavily on the classroom teacher. It is she, armed with tests and experience, who must finally determine when, at what rate, and in what fashion to present material. It is she who must determine whether some children have failed to acquire basic skills presented too early. The teacher must have content available to stimulate the advanced, before most of the class could profit. To accomplish all this, more than an academic understanding of readiness is needed. Skill, sensitivity, and art will be required.

## THE LEARNING SITUATION

Other major aspects of achievement are the nature of the task presented to the learner and the method of its presentation. Unlike motivation and readiness, the learning situation is provided by the school and not the student. Thus it is capable of extensive manipulation. Discovering ways of structuring the learning situation for maximum results is the business of the educational psychologist. That great differences in results do exist has been demonstrated in myriads of studies.

<sup>3</sup> One of the most original and stimulating researchers and writers in the field of cognition and learning is Jerome Bruner, a Harvard psychologist. See Bruner, 1959, 1960, 1961.

Results of changed techniques are usually not spectacular. Fads in teaching come and go, new techniques and gadgets ("teaching machines," for example) are offered to revolutionize education. While the revolution has not yet arrived, and while every advance is accompanied by some regression, a greater number and variety of students learn more efficiently than was true two or three decades ago.

The teacher or trainee should endeavor to learn from both method and subject-matter specialists, should eschew fads and cults, and should read and try to apply the results of current research in her field (with liberal dashes of salt, of course).

## Intelligence in the Classroom

The range of abilities in any classroom is likely to be great. The familiar normal distribution, with a large body of cases in the middle, tapering off to a few very high and very low, is the prototype of a class's ability curve. But almost never will such an idealized distribution be found literally in a given classroom. Even in first grade the very lowest cases, although eligible for schooling by age, will not attend, since they will require institutionalization or continuous parental care. Despite the school-attendance laws of most states, there will be a continual eroding away of those of lowest ability, whose absence the school will find it easy to overlook. In some schools the brightest in a given class may move up to more advanced grades. In other places, the exceptional at either end of the scale may move out into special-education classes.

There is also a "sociology of schools," apparent to even a casual observer. Social factors sort families into neighborhood groups that provide populations considerably different in intelligence. For this reason it is not uncommon to find IQ means varying ten to twenty points between two schools in the same community.

For these reasons a teacher should make few assumptions about the distribution of abilities in a given class. Unless it is a special-education group, there will be bright, average, and slow children present, but how bright or slow and in what numbers must be determined.

## EVIDENCE OF ABILITY

The teacher may draw on at least three sources for estimates of a child's ability. First (and in the long run, perhaps best) is the evidence of past experience. There is perhaps no better overall predictor of human behavior of any sort than past behavior. But in the first year or two of school, truly academic work is not extensive, and factors of maturity and emotional readiness for school are influential. By the upper grades, earlier slowness in developing a basic verbal or quantitative skill may have left a misleading record of achievement. Thus the teacher should examine a child's past record, but not be prejudiced by it.

The intelligence-test score is a next source of evidence. Meaningfulness of such a score depends on appropriateness of tests used, circumstances of administration, time elapsed since it was given, and accuracy of interpretation. If these conditions are satisfactory, a test score can improve considerably a teacher's estimate of a child's probable academic performance in her class.<sup>4</sup> The best of test scores is, of course, an imperfect index to learning achievement (for some of the reasons discussed earlier in this chapter).

A third source of estimate will be the teacher's own impression of the child in class. How quickly does he respond, and how accurate and complete are his responses? Does he deal with the abstract, or just with present stimuli? How well does he generalize? How wide is his knowledge? What is the quality of his language? Impressions of these and other characteristics lead to subjective evaluations which are worthy of consideration. Unfortunately, these subjective evaluations have not proved to be very reliable indices of ability. The child who is clean, polite, who uses acceptable English, and who has somewhat the same set of standards as the teacher is likely to be rated much higher than another youngster who lacks these qualities or who may be argumentative, boastful, and generally unpleasant. Yet the latter child *could* be far brighter than the first. Since even highly experienced teachers may be taken in by personal characteristics, the more objective data should take precedence over personal judgments.

<sup>4</sup> Both benefits and hazards of intelligence testing are too complex to discuss here. The reader is referred to McCandless, 1961; Morgan, 1961.

At this point a protest is often aired: "I don't care what a child's intelligence is. I'm only interested in what he *does*." But the student's potential is important, too, because it is just that—a kind of "could be." Since helping persons become the best of what they could be is a major aim of education, it is highly desirable to have some idea of the possible level which might be reached. Intelligence estimates are of value also in dealing with such practical pedagogical problems as appropriate level of material, rate of progress to aim for, and the like.

### CONSISTENCY OVER TIME

Consistency, rather than inconsistency, is the rule in development of individual intelligence. That is to say, when a teacher examines the record of a student entering her class, the odds are that he will exhibit a level of ability quite similar to that previously shown. But the odds in favor of consistency are based on the performance of large numbers of students, and some individuals, as usual, will confound the odds.

A longitudinal study of some California school children revealed the nature and extent of changes in one population. Less than 15 per cent stayed within ten IQ points of their original score from early childhood to maturity, while more than a third of the group changed more than twenty IQ points, some as many as fifty points. (Honzik, Macfarlane and Allen, 1948)

It should not be assumed, of course, that such changes occur abruptly or haphazardly. They are changes which follow a pattern. Some children are found to improve steadily and slowly through the growing years. Others show a slow and steady decline in ability. Still others may have a V-shaped curve, or its opposite. Figure 1 shows some individual curves of intellectual development found in a study at the Fels Institute in Ohio. Cases 2 and 6 show steady increases in test scores over the nine-year period from three to twelve. Cases 20 and 21 rise in middle childhood only to fall again to approximate the age-three level. Cases 75 and 78 show relative stability. Short-term fluctuations of a few points on test scores are expected and of no practical significance, but sudden and acute changes in intelligence suggest physical or emotional problems which warrant professional attention.

What is the cause of marked change in ability over time in



some children? As is so often the case, *what* happens is clearer than *why* it happens. There is no one agreed-upon answer. There are many reasons for supposing that inherent growth tendencies may play a major role. Environmental factors may be influential. In the Fels Institute study from which the above-mentioned cases were taken, personality correlates of rising and declining curves were found, some possibly reflecting the children's home environments. In preschool years, emotional independence from parents was associated with a rising curve. To age ten, a cluster of traits judged to imply a high achievement motive was significantly associated with improvement. (Sontag, Baker, and Nelson, 1958, pp. 136-137)

From whatever source, change is normal and expected for many children. Therefore, test scores and performance records a year or so old are useful, but data much older than this must be regarded as quite tentative and must be supplemented with up-to-date evidence in planning for the individual child.

## Manifestations of Ability

There are some generally typical learning characteristics observed and expected at each intelligence level. These typical behaviors are becoming generally known through their frequent description in textbooks and educational publications. (See, for example, Baller and Charles, 1962.) The difficulty with such general descriptions is that individual children frequently refuse to conform, or to exhibit behavior which is thought to be appropriate, to their intelligence level.

For example, following are three cases of children who are average in achievement but greatly different in ability. All have completed the sixth grade.

Four intelligence tests administered in Ricky's six years of schooling have yielded IQ scores of 83 to 87, in the "low-average" range. Ricky is normal physically, and his growth has been near the median at each age. His father is a skilled craftsman with an eighth-grade education. The mother has two years of high school and is employed as a dress-store clerk. Ricky is the only child.

He is clean, neat, pleasant, and rather more polite than most of his peers. He is not one of the first children to be chosen for either games or classroom activities, but seems to get along reasonably well with his



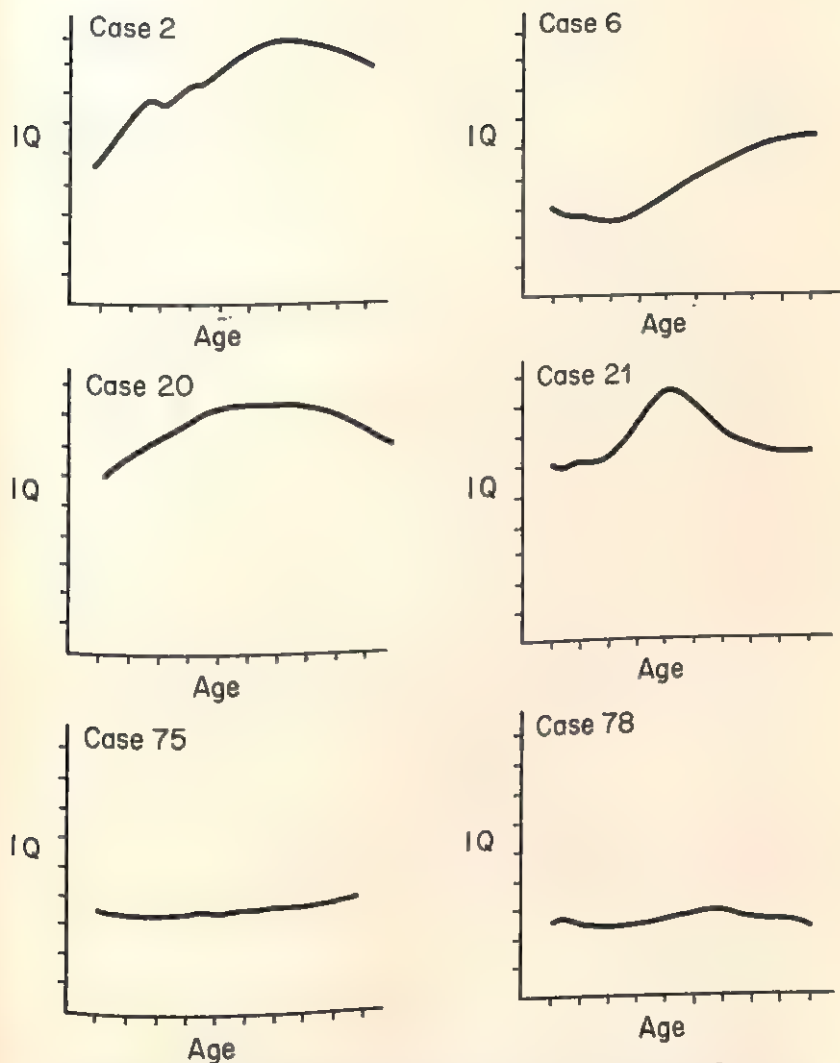


Figure 1. Representative Curves of Intellectual Development, ages three to twelve. Adapted from Sontag, L. W., Baker, C. T., and Nelson, Virginia, "Mental Growth and Personality Development: A Longitudinal Study," *Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 23, 1958, pp. 57, 61, 70.

peers. Particularly in the early grades, he played with girls rather more than did most of the boys in his class.

Ricky's report cards show average attainment. Teachers' written and verbal comments suggest that he is working at the top of his capacity when he does average work. He did not learn to read until he was in the second grade, but his reading level is consistently near or slightly below the average of his class. In number work, he could be counted upon to be among the last to grasp new concepts or procedures, but he could also be counted upon to get them eventually. Fractions have proved particularly troublesome for Ricky.

There has been more parental (mother, primarily) contact with the school than is true for most children. Ricky's parents feel their own lack of education keenly and have high aspirations for their son. Whenever homework has been assigned or suggested, Ricky's has been carefully and completely done, with what he admits has been considerable parental help. They are pleased with his progress, and are even now making plans for college for the boy.

The records show three tests for Norma, with scores of 94, 91, and 108. She is normal physically, but could not be called attractive. Her poorest feature is her protruding teeth, which appear to need the attention of an orthodontist. Norma is a quiet child who apparently has few friends. However, she is pleasant and responsive to social overture and seems to be reasonably happy and relaxed in school. There are few personal comments in the school records about her; indeed, she seems to be an easy child to overlook, with neither outstanding gifts nor problems.

She is truly average in achievement. Her semester reports for her six years of schooling show few deviations from the middle, and the year-end standardized achievement tests administered in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades record scores ranging from the 40th to the 65th percentiles.

Norma's parents are both high school graduates. Her father is an office worker and her mother primarily a homemaker, although she does some part-time bookwork for a fuel company. Their contact with school has been minimal. There are two younger siblings, one in third grade and one in first grade. There is no report on relationships within the family or on parental ambitions for their children.

Steve has superior abilities, if test scores of 127, 119, and 122 can be believed. He is the prototype of the jolly fat man—not seriously obese, but definitely overweight. In school he has consistently been well liked by students. With one exception, his teachers have also found him likable but frustrating because of his indolence and lack of concern for school work. The one exception was his fourth-grade teacher, who felt the disparity between his ability and achievement was so great that he should be held back a year to "teach him a lesson." Because his work was at least average, the principal would not

accept this teacher's recommendation. She had exerted constant pressure on him to get his work done, to work at home, to excel—all to no avail.

Steve's record is dismal in view of his abilities. He has no A grades, and enough D's to balance the handful of B's. The descriptive reports of the first two grades are replete with teachers' comments: "Does not finish what he starts." "Bothers other people." "Lacks neatness." His teachers report that he often has the basis for good work, but fails to finish the job, turns in a paper too messy to accept, or even loses what he has done before he turns it in.

Steve is the youngest of four children. His father is a businessman, a college graduate, and his mother has two years of college work. Steve's dependence on others for help and his occasional unreasonable demands for personal exemption from rules suggest that he may have experienced at home a rather soft and undemanding rearing. Both parents have come to school regularly for requested conferences and have been fairly regular attenders of PTA. Until recently, they have discussed Steve's ways with rather amused exasperation and detachment. Now (at the end of grade six) their concern is much deeper. Their social group is one in which children are expected to go to college and to enter business or professions afterwards. The question of what college or what profession would find their boy acceptable if he does not change markedly is difficult to answer.

Of the three, Norma presents the least apparent difficulty. Her academic performance has been consistent, generally satisfactory, and in line with predictive expectation. Her parents seem to be satisfied with her work. She can be expected to proceed through school without distinction or marked difficulty, one of the great mass of "average" children.

Ricky's situation is a different matter. His slow but near-average achievement is a good example of what a child of definitely limited ability can accomplish when motivation is high and environment stimulating. Doing so much with so little is likely to lead teachers and parents to expect and work for more—more than is possible, not infrequently. Then frustration occurs for all involved.

The American ideal of getting ahead, of being more than your father, of hitching your wagon to a star, has made us a nation of strivers and achievers. But what about star-high aspirations for one who is not designed for celestial travel? Like Icarus, he will have a nasty fall. It is contrary to teacher nature to discourage a child and his parents from high aspirations. But aspirations too much out of line with capacities and possibilities of real-

ization lead to much inefficiency, waste, and unhappiness.

Ricky and his family will need careful counseling in the school years ahead to keep Ricky working at capacity and to keep future plans and aspirations at a realistic level. It seems obvious, but perhaps it needs to be said: achievement should always be believed, rather than tests and predictions. A child can do no better than he can do. But for children like Ricky, short-term planning is safer than long-range planning.

What can be done about an unmotivated child like Steve? Generally speaking, there is probably little anyone can do. Physiological factors should, of course, be considered. In Steve's case, there have been regular medical checks with negative findings, so the problem would seem to be psychological in nature. Assurances that he will outgrow his "lazy ways" are not sound: some children do change markedly at adolescence or at maturity, but the odds are great that behavior will continue as it has in the past. Furthermore, years of sliding over fundamentals, of just "getting by" in class after class, do not provide a background of competence, knowledge, study habits, or self-discipline to be used in catching up. The deficiencies have some permanence. Nagging, scolding, and cajoling have been fruitless and will continue to be.

The school or parents should provide professional psychological analysis and counseling (or, in some cases, psychiatric referral) for Steve and others like him. Past experience, however, does not give us much assurance that anything can be done to transform an unmotivated youngster into the aggressive go-getter our culture rewards. There are even those who feel that our culture needs some "be-ers" as well as "doers"!

## WORKING WITH EXTREMES

As noted earlier in this chapter, the range of abilities in any classroom is likely to be great. Working with the retarded and the gifted requires some special competence in the teacher, and promises some special rewards. Both ends of the continuum of intelligence have been studied assiduously for decades (almost to the exclusion of the great masses of average children!); so much is known about the high and low children.

Despite the mass of evidence, there is by no means perfect

agreement on the best educational practices for them. Should the bright (dull) be enrolled in the regular classroom, or sent to special classes? Should they be moved up a grade or two (held back a year or two), or receive enrichment (tutoring) in their regular classroom? Because of the pressing nature of these problems, interest of educators is high, and a flood of books, monographs, and pamphlets has appeared on the topic in the last few years. The reader is referred to the following material, listed in "Recommended Reading," as setting forth descriptions of representative approaches: Cruickshank and Johnson, 1958; Erickson, 1962; Kelley and Stevens, 1950; Kirk, 1962; Norris, 1958; Worcester, 1958.

## Creativity and Originality

In the early years of intelligence measurement, it was generally assumed that creative people were those persons who were highest in intelligence. For example, Lewis Terman called the research reports about his population of very superior California school children (140+ IQ) *Genetic Studies of Genius*. (Terman, 1925 *et seq.*) As Terman's studies and other investigations of the very superior continued, it became apparent that being unusually bright was one thing and that being creative was something else. Sometimes the two occurred together, but not necessarily. A child might be very bright without being creative or original, and the reverse could as easily be true.

The reason for this apparent anomaly lies in the nature of the two phenomena being discussed. "Creativity" might be described as originality, uniqueness, or an idiosyncratic way of doing things, of solving problems. "Intelligence," as described earlier, has to do with book learning, grade-getting, and academic efficiency. Thus, a youngster may be highly conforming, efficient, and able to grasp what he reads and hears quickly, but be relatively poor at producing ideas or solutions or products uniquely his own. Obviously, a reasonably bright person has a better chance of being creative than a dull or feeble-minded one. It is probably safe to say that there is a critical point for every art or discipline—the minimum level necessary to acquire the basic knowledge and skill in the area—but beyond this point intelligence is irrelevant. What are the characteristics of creative persons, then, if intel-



ligence is not critical? Systematic attempts to answer this question are relatively recent; for this reason the data are sketchy and inconclusive. Two lines of study are being pursued. One is to devise stimuli to which children and adolescents are asked to respond. Those who make original, unusual, playful, esthetic, or elegant responses are called "creative" and are compared on many characteristics with the routine conformers or "noncreatives." The other approach is to identify adults—musicians, mathematicians, architects—who have demonstrated their creativity, and make intensive examinations of their characteristics and past experiences.

### STUDIES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

In the first-mentioned approach the validity of the criterion—the paper-and-pencil or situational tests of creativity—may be questioned; whether these will predict creative behavior in later life has not been demonstrated. However, differences in personality and behavior between children judged "creative" and "noncreative" have been found. E. Paul Torrance of the University of Minnesota has studied many such children. He describes the creative ones thus: they enjoy learning in a way which appears to be fun, they manipulate objects and situations in novel and unconventional ways, they have rich fantasy lives and are exceptionally sensitive to problems. The boys seem somewhat effeminate, the girls somewhat masculine. Some high-IQ children fit his criterion of creativity, but many do not. Many average and superior children test more creative than the intellectually gifted. (Torrance, 1961)

Chicago psychologists Getzels and Jackson have carried out similar studies with adolescents as subjects. They, too, found that IQ was not useful as a predictor of their criterion of creativity. Like the Minnesota children, the Chicago adolescents were intuitive, tolerant of ambiguity, independent, inclined toward discovering rather than remembering, and were inclined to go off in new directions. The high-IQ but noncreative adolescent was much more likely to be conforming, conventional, to focus on the usual, on the "right" answer. (Getzels and Jackson, 1962)

Teachers of both these groups preferred the high-IQ noncreatives. The teachers of Torrance's creative children often

thought them wild, silly, or naughty, not serious or dependable, or even promising. The Chicago teachers had similar feelings about the creative adolescents.

## RETROSPECTIVE STUDIES

Studies of a retrospective nature have been supported by the Carnegie Corporation and carried out at the University of California at Berkeley. A report on the characteristics of successful, highly regarded creative architects is revealing, because their field combines scientific and technical competence with artistic demands. Creative adults in general, and architects in particular, were described as dominant, self-confident, poised but not sociable, outspoken and uninhibited, unconventional socially and intellectually, highly motivated, nonconforming, flexible, and more feminine in interest than the average. Such persons obviously have many occasions to be in conflict with others.

The remembered and reported early experiences of these creative architects are of considerable interest. They recall, as children, great freedom and independence granted them by parents. At the same time, they experienced a lack of intense closeness with one or both of the parents and a general lack of emotional involvement with parents. Whether these reflections are factual reports of early experience or the creative persons' perceptions of their experiences cannot be determined. At any rate, their reports are clearly different from those of the noncreative. (MacKinnon, 1962)

In a biographical study, four hundred "eminent" persons of the twentieth century from many areas—politics, art, science, drama, etc.—were identified and their lives studied. From this study a picture emerges of childhoods which were unhappy and stressful for a majority. Three-fourths of these persons as children experienced poverty, broken homes, or rejecting parents. One-fourth were handicapped by blindness, illness, and other physical troubles. The parents tended to be opinionated and domineering (one-fourth of the mothers, one-twentieth of the fathers), but there was little mental illness in their homes. Three-fifths of these eminent persons loathed school, especially secondary school, and were highly dissatisfied with both school and teachers. (Goertzel and Goertzel, 1962)

## CREATIVE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

Our present level of understanding of creativity, its nature and its origins, does not encourage easy generalization or specific recommendation for the care and encouragement of creative children. Yet there is some consistency in the evidence from different kinds of studies using different age groups as subjects. Creative children, adolescents, and adults are highly individualistic, unusual in many of their perceptual, cognitive, and intellectual ways, inclined to nonconforming social behavior and rich perceptual and emotional lives.

The least the teacher and school can do to encourage the potentially creative is to accept individuality, within the limits of the general welfare of a class, to keep down pressures for conforming as much as possible, and to accept each child as the unique person he is—even if that person is not a particularly lovable one.

Some other suggestions come from the Berkeley studies:

1. Since data suggest that intelligence is irrelevant beyond a minimum required for mastery in a field, nonintellective factors must be attended to more thoughtfully than has been the case.
2. Limits on experience and expression should be set cautiously, since creative persons are so open to both inner and outer experience.
3. Discipline and self-control must be learned, but not overlearned.
4. Perceptiveness of even the most fantastic of ideas and possibilities should be encouraged equally with evaluation and criticism.
5. Teaching of sense perception through learning of facts, drill, etc., and of intuitive perception through transfer of training, analogies, similes, and symbolic equivalents should be encouraged to stimulate intuitive thinking.
6. A large body of facts is necessary, as well as reasoning skills.

MacKinnon concludes with advice which should be helpful to all who teach:

These and other data should remind all of us who teach that creative students will not always be to our liking. This will be due not only to their independence in situations in which nonconformity may be seriously disruptive of the work of others, but because, as we have seen, more than most they will be experiencing large quantities of tension produced in them by the richness of their experience and the strong opposites of their nature. In struggling to reconcile these opposites and in striving to achieve creative solutions to the difficult problems which they have set themselves they will often show that psychic turbulence which is so characteristic of the creative person. If, however, we can

only recognize the sources of their disturbance, which often enough will result in behavior disturbing to us, we may be in a better position to support and encourage them in their creative striving.<sup>5</sup>

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# 4

## Children as Social Creatures

IN THE first three chapters emphasis has been on children as individuals. Without diminishing this emphasis in any way, attention must be given to children as social creatures, as members of groups.

There are several aspects of a child's social nature. One is the social milieu that produced him—the home, socio-economic background, neighborhood, and community. Another is the self that is presented to the world—his appearance, intelligence, charm, and all that goes to make him a particular social stimulus. Then there is his habitual or typical response to others. All these interact in a complex way to determine what kind of social creature each child is.

When a five-year-old enters kindergarten, he enters a complex new world. Society delegates to schools the tasks of passing on the accumulated wisdom of the culture and of teaching necessary skills. But schools are not only transmitters of social learning, they *are* small societies in themselves. Students, and teachers, too, must be studied as parts of a whole, not just as entities in themselves.

### Cultural Molding

By the time he starts school, a child has a fairly well-defined social personality, part of which is the product of inherent individual uniqueness and part of which is the result of five years of cultural molding. Since both child and teacher usually will share the general culture of the Western world, it is the socio-economic class and family background that will be most critical in influenc-

ing the pupil's behavior. It is probable that marked differences between a teacher's and a pupil's social background contribute greatly to failure of communication and understanding, and consequently to educational problems.

## SOCIAL CLASS

Since the great majority of teachers have come from the middle class, or at least have a middle-class "reference group," its values permeate the school—or perhaps more correctly, middle-class values determine the ambitions and expectations of teachers, administrators, board members, parent-teacher associations, school boards, and the like. Certainly not all the *students* absorb middle-class values. What are these values? Cleanliness, Godliness, ambition, obedience, "getting ahead," being accepted by the group, conforming, and similar success-oriented concepts. Tensions may develop in middle-class persons from the coexisting demands for conformity and for aggressive striving.

Upper-class children do not have a very large impact on childhood society or schools. One reason is that in general they share most middle-class values, but with less need for either striving or conforming; they can afford to be more relaxed. Another reason is the relatively small proportion of such children: the upper is the smallest class in numbers, and a great many of their children attend private schools, where they are carefully segregated from lower-middle and lower-class children.

Lower-class children are in the majority in our nation. Their values are likely to be determined by expediency rather than philosophy. Because of the presence or threat of deprivation of all sorts, immediate and not deferred satisfactions are sought. Thus, school work which in general is seen as preparing the child for some future or abstract goal—college, a good job, good citizenship—has little meaning for these children. Since they not infrequently are also of a minority race or religious group (or hold no religious values), they are further out of tune with the middle-class school.

The fact of lower-class preponderance in numbers does not imply that every school or even most schools are numerically dominated by these children. In the first place, economic segre-

gation by residence area, as well as by direct political segregation, confines a great many of these children to "their own" schools, with little middle-class admixture. Too, most schools are so unsatisfying to lower-class children that they drop out in increasing numbers, so that each grade enrolls a smaller percentage of lower-class children. Attendance laws are less vigorously enforced at the lower end of the socio-economic scale.

Both the term and the idea of social class are objectionable to many democratically minded Americans. But class exists and probably always will. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that as our society ages, class lines are "hardening" somewhat. That is, children seem more likely to enter the father's occupational level than was true several decades ago. (Pressey and Kuhlen, 1957)

It must not be supposed, of course, that members of a given class are alike in their values, any more than members of a given intellectual group are alike in their achievement. Descriptions of social-class phenomena are generalizations and represent tendencies. *Some* lower-class children are clean, striving, and highly accepted; *some* middle-class children are indolent, dirty, and non-conforming. But since any classroom, especially in elementary school, is likely to have children from different classes, it is well to recognize some possible correlates of class status.

Lower-class children are doubly influenced by their family origins. They come to school lacking the values, the motives, the experience of middle-class children and thus begin kindergarten with a handicap. During their school careers, they are objects of some prejudice on the part of teachers (who naturally prefer the children whose values and readiness for learning are more in tune with school culture) and on the part of other students for somewhat the same reasons. Judged by middle-class children, those of lower class tend to be downgraded in traits such as leadership, friendship, good looks, and other desirable characteristics. (Neugarten, 1946) Thus, a child from the lower class who aspires to middle-class ways will often have to struggle against pressures from his own family to conform to their ways, against a frequently prejudiced teacher, and against a rejecting attitude from his classmates. Small wonder that there are often tensions, conflicts, and lack of *esprit de corps* in socially mixed classrooms.

## HOME INFLUENCES

The home has two major influences on child behavior. One is the educational influence, in which skills and competencies, as well as values and ideals, are transmitted. The other influence lies in the emotional climate of the home, from which a child learns, usually subtly and indirectly, how to value and how to feel about himself and others.

The educational aspect of family living is in part direct and conscious: the child is taught to control bowel and bladder, to eat with tools other than fingers, to talk, and in general to look after his basic needs. Cultural values are transmitted in part through deliberate teaching—"We don't use words like that; it isn't nice"—and in part through indirect means, as when parental conversation or tone of voice betrays fear or hostility toward some person or group (police, Negroes, foreigners) in conversation overheard by the child. Some of the content of this teaching will reflect the social class of the family, but much will be the product of the parents' own backgrounds, needs, and values.

The number and variety of studies on family structures and atmospheres is legion. There are studies of one- and two-parent homes, studies of discipline, of sibling relationships, of mother-child and father-child interaction, studies with a Freudian or psychoanalytic approach, studies with no theoretical basis—in fact, studies of almost any conceivable family relationship. It might be hoped that a fairly specific set of rules, of do's and don't's, could be inferred from the accumulated evidence, or that, knowing the family background of a child, it would be possible to predict his social and emotional behavior with fair accuracy. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

What may be inferred from the studies is that family relationships are exceedingly complex, so only the broadest generalizations are possible. Negative indicators are more readily apparent than positive ones. Emotional deprivation in infancy seems generally to have deleterious effects on good development. Failure to find a warm and loving relationship with someone—parent or parent-substitute—leads to adjustment problems immediately and in later life as well. Extremes of disciplinary practice, whether authoritarian or permissive, seem generally to lead to interpersonal behavior which generates social, and thus emotional,



trouble for children. *Specifics* such as breast or bottle (or even cup) feeding, spanking or not spanking, mother in the home or working, dominant father or dominant mother, and so forth, seem to depend for their effect on the complex interaction of individual personalities in the family and expectations of the social group of which it is a part.

The teacher would be well advised to learn all she can about a child's family. From her knowledge she may attempt to explain some aspects of a child's behavior in school. These "explanations" should be regarded as very tentative hypotheses, however, and should be subject to constant revision as she gains more knowledge and insight into a child's ways. To say that Betty is what she is because she was weaned too soon, was spanked or indulged, her parents were divorced, her mother works, her father does not play the appropriate masculine role, she is the oldest (youngest) child in the family, and so on, is to judge from insufficient evidence. Any or all of the above may influence Betty's ways. None is *the* cause of her behavior, and, in fact, none of them may be of major importance in her case.

## Socialization in School

Home and community place their imprint on the child early in life. These preschool years are of major and lasting importance in molding character and social personality. But without question the next social influence of importance is the school.

The society of the home, whether child- or adult-centered, must necessarily place the child in a dependent, more-or-less passive position. While he may be active in neighborhood play groups, he can retreat to his family if things do not go well. It is harder to escape siblings, but in most families, relationships among the children are to some degree parent-structured.

Thus, when he starts school, the child is for the first time a member of a society in which participation, roles, and status will be determined largely by the members. It is a society from which he cannot escape during set hours and days of every week. It is for him the equivalent of the adult society which his parents and teacher encounter in their daily lives. Getting along with others in childhood is not simply a matter of finding playmates or hav-



ing fun, but rather of finding a place in, or fitting into, a social world—the world of peers.

### DYNAMICS OF SOCIALIZATION

Children come to school differing greatly in social motivation and competence. Some of the difference is the product of experience—the amount of dependence on parents, the warmth and satisfaction of relations with parents and with siblings (if any), opportunities for experience with peers in the neighborhood, nursery school experience, and the like. Some differences in apparent need or enjoyment of social contacts appear very early in life from causes which are at this point obscure.

It is safe to say, however, that *most* children come to school eager for the promised new opportunities for finding playmates. This is especially true for children who are secure enough in emotional relations with parents to “let go,” to feel free to establish new ties and enjoy new experiences.

From kindergarten to adolescence the picture is one of increasing interest in and dependence on peers. Parents and the parent-substitute teacher remain “home base,” but more and more, peers are the source of support and satisfaction. This is as it should be if the child is going to grow up to healthy and independent adulthood. It means, however, that peer groups become much more than just a source of partners for cowboys or doll games, ventures in the woods, or sports.

As peer groups increase in importance with age, their functions enlarge. The youngster comes to school generally accepting his family's values and morals. Gradually his group begins to substitute somewhat for family as arbiter. In the lower grades this is likely to mean conforming in superficial ways—wearing sneakers instead of leather shoes, carrying a sack lunch instead of a tin bucket, using popular slang instead of proper and grammatical phrases. In later childhood, and of course in adolescence, the values promulgated by the group are more basic—moral behavior in honesty and sex relations, for example.

If the peer group to which the child belongs (or which serves as his reference group even if he is not accepted) holds values reasonably similar to those of the youngster's family, only the normal conflict between generations is stirred up. If, however, his

peer group is markedly out of line with the culture of the home, much tension and conflict will be produced. While rejection of home is difficult and emotionally disturbing, rejection of peers leaves the older child or adolescent adrift, for approval from home is not a substitute for a place in peer society.

Eugene was orphaned by an automobile accident when he was six. He was taken over (though not legally adopted) by two maiden aunts, the older sisters of his dead mother. He bore well the shock of losing his family—there were no other children—and started school in the second semester of the first grade in the rather well-to-do suburb where his aunts lived.

Eugene's early classroom experiences were successful. He was bright, and he made himself agreeable to the teacher. His playground life was less happy. He was not well accepted by the other children. His parents had sheltered him excessively, he had had little early play experience, and the aunts aggravated his "differentness" by keeping him dressed up in a fashion not locally practiced, where sneakers, jeans, and T-shirts were boys' usual school dress. The aunts frequently drove him to school, a matter of only a few blocks, in their expensive automobile, and always called for him in rain or cold. He was regarded as a sissy by the other boys and was rejected by the girls as well. The remainder of his first year at school was miserable.

The kindly and genteel aunts recognized something of the nature of the problem, but were too removed from the society of the young couples who were the parents of Eugene's classmates to change their approach. They did send the boy to a good summer camp, where he had supervised contact with other boys under the guidance of male recreation leaders, with the emotional warmth of a housemother to sustain him. By fall he had gained some competence in games and some small insight into his difficulties with peers.

His reaction was to woo his peers and reject his aunts. He began by misbehaving in the classroom, not seriously, but enough to elicit an unfavorable reaction from the teacher and to attract attention and laughter from the other children. He would hide from the aunts and refuse to ride home with them much of the time. He discovered that burlesquing his aunts' genteel ways shocked or amused his peers, and he learned to play the clown as he ridiculed his home life. He became highly skilled at games, and since he was bright and personable, he gradually won the acceptance of his classmates.

This remained the pattern of his behavior for the rest of his school days—seeking and finding popularity with peers, and rejecting his baffled guardians. His school work, though not as good as it could have been, was satisfactory, and his behavior in school never caused serious trouble. He was not regarded as a problem by teachers. As an adolescent, his popularity continued, although marred by his superior attitude toward peers outside his own clique. His academic work was ex-

cellent in some areas, but poor in others where he had conflicts with certain teachers. A close affectionate relationship with the aunts never developed, partly through his early rejection of them and partly through their lack of comprehension of Eugene and his generation.

The need for peer acceptance is very great for most children, and satisfying the need may be accomplished in ways which cause pain and conflict in other areas of behavior.

## DEVELOPMENT OF PEER RELATIONS

Since both need and opportunity are great for establishing good relations with peers, youngsters devote a great deal of energy to the process. At first, relationships are tentative and transitory, but before long the child has acquired one or several friends. These are almost surely, during the school years, to be of the same sex. The mores of middle childhood simply do not allow much boy-girl closeness in most situations, although, of course, they may play together at times.

By third or fourth grade, the children usually belong quite informally to a small group which plays together and which sets standards of dress, language, and the like. These groups (sometimes called "gangs," but not with an implication of delinquency) are very important to the child, both in satisfying the belonging need and in their teaching and standard-setting functions. The population of such a group changes gradually as members grow, develop, and move away from each other, but at any given time most children are very much attached to the "gang." This group is likely to be fairly homogeneous in the background, intelligence, growth stage, and adjustment of its members.

Not all children find the gang either desirable or necessary. Occasionally a youngster with siblings close in age finds so much satisfaction in the family group that he feels little need to look beyond it for companionship, though he may freely engage in games with other groups and be quite acceptable to them. Still others may find that having one or two very close friends satisfies his (more often, her) need for companionship.

What about the isolate, the "loner"? Sociometric studies inevitably show that some children are outsiders, accepted by no group. In our gregarious society, such children draw attention to themselves and concern both parents and teachers. When a child

is an isolate, the first step is to look for the source of aloneness. Is it the child's own choice, or is it forced upon him? While the great majority of youngsters want and need much companionship, a few seem not to care. These may be very bright children who find so much in the world to interest them that people do not matter much, or they may prefer to be alone for other reasons. The generally solitary ways of many creative persons were discussed in the previous chapter, and should be kept in mind. It is probably safe to speculate, however, that most children who are isolates do not desire that state and need help in escaping it.

There is usually no one cause for unpopularity. Sometimes the outcast is "different" because of growth rate, race, religion, intelligence, or social class. Sometimes parents' ways—rigidity of discipline, overemphasis on cleanliness, lack of freedom—hinder a child's social development. Usually it is the child's own ways which cause his rejection: being quarrelsome, bossy, a "tattle-tale," or "stuck-up" creates dislike. This rejection, in turn, will create anxieties which may produce even more disagreeable behavior, and so the cycle goes on.

### HOW THE TEACHER CAN HELP

The diagnosis of social problems requires that many avenues of exploration be tried. Hilda Taba describes an attempt in one school to understand social relationships in an eighth-grade classroom. First came diagnosis by means of sociometric measures (see Chapter 1), individual teacher interviews with students, open themes (many of which turned out to be about personal problems), teacher interview with parents, and diaries kept for two-day periods on weekends. (Taba and Elkins, 1950, pp. 1-30) Out of this diagnostic effort came a picture of the social structure of the class, of the peer choices and rejections, and, most important, of some of the reasons for problems. The narrator of this study says:

I knew that these children had many serious worries. Some grew out of peer relations. I would have to help these students develop skills and behaviors needed for social acceptance. Some worries centered in the children's families. I had identified some aspects of family life that caused anxiety: too much adult authority, lack of affection and security, inability to see parent's point of view, inability to give parents



affection, belonging to a minority group, conflict with parents who had mores of a nationality group. It seemed important to help children understand situations that arose in their families, to explore their own feelings about these situations, to analyze what was involved in the situations, to learn to handle them successfully, to extend their ideas of what other families are like, to find ways of living more happily with their own families.<sup>1</sup>

The above paragraph sets forth two major loci of children's social difficulties—peers and parents—and suggests approaches to alleviate troubles: development of skills, and development of understanding.

What help the school can give comes largely from ways of structuring two kinds of relationships: first, a teacher's relationship with each child in her class, and second, the relationship of children in a classroom with each other.

The social role of the teacher, especially in elementary school, is in large part that of parent-surrogate. This status has advantages and disadvantages. For the third of a day that the child spends with her, the teacher can offer affection and emotional support to the child who may not get much at home. She can use this emotional relationship as motivation in helping guide a child to better ways of behaving. For the older child or adolescent, the teacher as parent-surrogate may accept confidences and offer counsel which the very closeness of parent-child relations often prevents. On the other hand, the likeness of teachers to parents may be a handicap. Many children, hostile to parents, generalize this hostility to all authority figures—teachers, police, and adults in general. Such cases are not likely to be easily reached or helped.

The teacher must play the parent role with caution and intelligence. An immature and unemancipated youngster, for example, may attach himself to the teacher for security, trying to make the school situation as much like home as possible. In this case too close a relationship is obviously bad for the child, much as he may enjoy it. "Teacher's pet" fares no better with peers than does "mama's boy." The child must not be rejected, but the teacher must maintain adequate social distance and use her position to channel the child's energies into more frequent and more satisfy-

<sup>1</sup> Taba, Hilda, and Elkins, Deborah, *With Focus on Human Relations*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1950, p. 31.



ing contact with peers. Emotional closeness to children is satisfying to most teachers, but it is important that the relationship be used to encourage the child's independence and social growth.

The major role of the teacher, of course, is that of possessor and giver of knowledge. In the social context, this means that the teacher can give information and advice about human relations, can instruct her pupils in manners, customs, dress, and deportment and can help children to evaluate their own ways. She can help her students learn of the ways of other people and encourage attitudes of interest and acceptance. Some of this is accomplished by direct instruction, much by her own attitudes and behavior toward all kinds of persons.

However scornful of "fancy manners" they may seem on the surface, older children and adolescents are intensely curious about manners and want to know what is the right thing to do on various social occasions. Such instruction is best accepted when it is brought into learning situations indirectly or incidentally, rather than in specific units labeled "manners."

A teacher influences social behavior, then, through her emotional relationship with each individual pupil (of which more will be said later) and through direct and indirect instruction. She has another opportunity to aid social growth in her influence on the social structure of the classroom.

## The Society of the Classroom

The classroom is a society in microcosm. It contains individuals and small groups or cliques. But the total group has a unity, an atmosphere that is distinctive: it might be said that a class has a "personality" of its own. The teacher is partially—but only partially—a cause or determiner of this atmosphere. It is interesting to hear two teachers describe the same class: for one teacher it is "lively, ambitious, competitive, and fun to work with"; for another it is "noisy, quarrelsome, disobedient, tiring to work with." Yet each teacher is describing the same group of children! From the terms used by the two teachers it is apparent that this is a collection of children who, as a group, are energetic, aggressive, and outgoing. The emotional climate produced is in large part, then, a function of what each teacher does as she interacts with

these children. Like it or not, the teacher must work with a group or groups, not just with individuals.

While group atmospheres evolve and change, most of the social structuring occurs fairly early. Except in a new school, it is likely that some of the children in a class already know each other, and in most cases there will already be some small groups and cliques in existence. In upper grades there will be a carry-over of expectation from previous years together for many of the children.

## COMMUNICATION

The teacher's first influence on the group will probably be in the area of communication. Communication consists of being understood, not just being heard. Thus, a clear voice and diction combined with appropriate vocabulary is important, but what is vital is the transmission of sincerity, belief, and honest intent. The author recently heard a teacher welcoming children to a new school; the phrases she used were trite but unobjectionable. Her tone of voice, however, was sugary and artificial. The children, sixth-graders, squirmed, rolled their eyes, coughed, and expressed disbelief and revulsion with their whole beings. As they swarmed out of the auditorium, snatches of conversation could be heard: "We just *love* having you" (falsetto); "Oh, yeah, it'll be just *won*-derful here"; "Boy, did she spread it!" Children have no sixth sense, but they are extremely perceptive of artificiality and insincerity, perhaps because adults so frequently talk down to them or try to disguise their real feelings.

The other half of communication consists of the teacher's understanding of the children. And again, more is transmitted than the words a child uses. Pitch of voice, tone, expression add depth to the words. A useful teaching skill is that of summarizing and boiling down poorly or inadequately expressed ideas of children and returning them as generalizations or sometimes as queries. "You mean . . . ?" "Do I understand you correctly that . . . ?" "Could one say . . . ?" Such phrases followed by the teacher's perception of what her students are trying to tell her are helpful in several ways. The comments may clarify the thoughts of the speaker and of the other children. It gives everyone time to think a bit; if the teacher has misunderstood, it leaves

the way open for corrections; and, not least, it makes it clear to the class that their teacher is actually trying to understand them. Sometimes the teacher reflects some of the emotion she perceives in a voice or expression: "Am I right, John, that that idea upsets you a little?" "Mary, does what Bob said make you angry?" What might become a series of dialogues between a teacher and individual pupils becomes a conversation in which all, or at least most, are participants. Group cohesion, as well as learning, are enhanced.

## GROUP NORMS

As noted earlier, peer groups develop their own norms. These norms, especially in young children, will naturally reflect home values strongly. But by late childhood most of the rules by which children live are formulated by peers with little reference to parents and teachers. The strength of these ways lies in the child's fear of group rejection if he does not conform. It is important that teachers be aware of the nature and influence of these norms.

Where the implications are not basic or important, as in minor matters of dress, playground games, and slang, it is probably best to accept the group's choices without necessarily approving them. Where the peer-group norms are clearly inimical to good learning, morality, or health, the teacher must take a stand. One approach is through the normal classroom controls—reward for desirable behavior, such as praise, special and desirable tasks, high marks, special notice, and the like; and on the other hand, punishment such as poor marks, deprivation of privilege, and referral to parents and higher school authority. The school's weapons are strong enough to win most battles, or at least strong enough to make children give in verbally or superficially. It is important not to engage in constant skirmishes over trivialities, because nagging and bickering between teacher and pupil interfere with learning and erode all cooperation and good feeling.

When youthful ways must be changed, the teacher should use all the means at her disposal, get the job done with as little loss of face to the youngsters as possible, and move on quickly without recriminations or backward looks. Where change is vital, failure cannot be tolerated, for it will make an impossible educational situation.

Of greater value than reward or punishment techniques is attitude change brought about by the teacher's working with group leaders and status figures among the student body. Such group influence is subtle and gradual, but meaningful, because the changes are based on conviction, not coercion.

Larry suffered from a bone disease when he was in the fourth grade and had to stay out of school most of the year. The next fall the family moved to a new community, and Larry, still on crutches, started in Miss Poe's fourth grade in the new school. His newness in an established group and his status as a cripple left him "outside" socially. For reasons not entirely clear, he was not only ignored as a friend or companion, but was actively rejected, and he became the butt of much crude joking and humor. He was apparently the first crippled child most of the other students had known.

Miss Poe seated him by Jeffrey, the most popular boy in the class, in hopes that a productive friendship would develop. This attempt failed. Jeffrey ignored Larry.

The favorite game at this time was a playground version of soccer. Larry, of course, was not chosen at all when sides were picked. Again Miss Poe intervened and asked the leader Jeffrey to choose Larry. This he did reluctantly, but Larry was as usual left on the sidelines. Then Miss Poe suggested that Larry be used as goalie. With his crutches to extend his reach, he was a superb, if unorthodox, goalie. Rather dramatically his handicap became a virtue, he gained his first acceptance, and in the course of time he became a well-liked member of the group.

In a typical case such as this, the teacher's authority could prevent most hazing and actual harm to the boy, but only by working through the peer group itself could the real objective be attained.

## Learning by Working Together

The conduct of academic learning experiences should contribute to social learning. Structuring academic situations to gain the most social good from them does not ordinarily detract from "book learning," but rather enhances it.

Class discussion permits children to pool ideas and understanding. As noted above, children are intensely concerned with having the "right" perceptions—right being that of the peer group—so they naturally enter into such discussions. It is vital, of



course, that discussions be guided and not be mere wordplay. In the first place, a few children may dominate the discussion, either through strength of character or ability, if the teacher does not guide. In the second place, every class is made up of subgroups, cliques, and left-out children, and it is important to get balanced participation. Too, there must be a feeling of getting something done, or frustration will result. Too much criticism will kill discussion; too little evaluation will render it meaningless.

For some topics or projects, small groups may be formed out of the whole. This may provide an opportunity for utilizing existing cliques, involving isolated children, or attempting to structure new groups. Committees can serve the same purpose.

It must be remembered, of course, that group work is not always desirable. Creative and deeply thoughtful operations require individual effort. Some people do their best work alone throughout life, and insistence on a great deal of group participation for such children is like punishment. A healthy balance between individual study and group effort will produce the most effective academic and social learning.

### ACADEMIC SUBJECTS IN SOCIAL LEARNING

In the Taba and Elkins study of an eighth grade (described earlier) English and Social Studies were used as social teaching devices. In English, stories about families and about children and adolescents were read, analyzed, and discussed from a human-relations point of view as well as from a traditional standpoint. The school had a mixture of social and ethnic groups, and to increase understanding, a unit called "People of America" was developed. Topics studied included "Our Families Come to America," "Who Are Americans?" and "How Newcomers Helped."

Combined with other individual and group work with the class, results were encouraging. The authors report:

Improvement in ability to work in groups and to relate themselves to each other.

Reduction in general hostility.

Improvement in use of democratic procedures in school and at home.

Reduction of prejudgment about others, and increase in understanding.

Growth in ability to think through a problem, to consider and apply a variety of possible solutions.



Increased ability to predict consequences of behavior.  
Greater than average gain in academic skills.<sup>2</sup>

While learning in social groups is no panacea, it obviously has much to offer in aiding both academic and "real life" growth.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-206.

## Personality and Adjustment

EVERYONE HAS at least a vague notion of what "personality" means. Difficulties arise, however, when an inclusive, specific definition is sought. The difficulty probably stems in part from haziness of the concept in most persons' minds, but in larger part from the complexity of the subject. To consider a child's personality is to consider everything that makes him what he is—appearance, physical functioning, abilities, habitual and occasional behavior, social competence, self-perception. Some personality theorists stress traits, some emphasize structure, and some self-perception. It is perhaps most profitable for the teacher, considering a child's personality, not to embrace a particular theory or to look for *an* explanation, but to observe, to seek causes, to recognize complexity, and to avoid too early and too simple explanation of behavior.

### ORIGINS OF PERSONALITY

While the last half-century has seen a strong—almost exclusive—emphasis on experience as the determiner of personality, developments in genetics, biochemistry, and related fields have made it obvious that it is necessary now to start with the physical organism in studying behavior. From the moment of birth, genetically determined uniqueness is exhibited by the skeletal system, the digestive tract, the muscular system, the nervous system, the endocrine system, the anatomy of the blood, and so on.

This uniqueness of structure and function results in a predisposition to behavior which is peculiar to the individual. As noted earlier, the child's energy supply and mode of expression of en-

ergy is a basic factor in his personality make-up. His abilities and capacities to learn depend basically on neural factors. Emotions are fundamentally physical in effect and in expression. The influence of a child's absolute and relative size on his behavior are apparent to the most casual observer. Motor competence and style, discussed earlier, have their influence also.

Every person inherits a physical structure somewhat predisposed to function in certain ways—that is, to respond quickly or slowly, to grow rapidly or slowly, to metabolize rapidly or slowly. What does experience do to these inherent predispositions? In general, environmental pressures tend to modify these tendencies, but not to reverse them completely. For example, diet will influence both rate and amount of growth, but with diet constant, two children with different “built-in” growth factors will still differ in rate and amount of growth. So it is with abilities, with emotions, and with all the other elements of behavior.

The major environmental influence on personality is probably that of parents, especially mother or mother substitute. The direct influence of the maternal relationship on personality is not clear and explicit at this time, but it is clear that an absence of close affectional relationship with someone in early life is damaging and fundamentally harmful to good personality development. Next in order of importance is probably influence of peers (discussed in an earlier chapter).

Then there is the culture in which a child is immersed. While it is generally true that the total range of human personality is exhibited in every culture, there is a kind of “central tendency of personality” in each culture which is clearly the product of learning experiences. Thus a Pacific coast Kwakiutl Indian in the last century was remarkably different from a Navajo of the Southwest, as an English schoolboy is today from the son of a Mexican peon, or a rural Negro child in the South from an upper-class urban white child of similar age.

Which is more influential in the development of personality: heredity or experience? Franz Kallmann sums up the relationship:

Environmental influences are vital and after conception they gain coequality with those arising from heredity. However, only within the limits set by the genic constitution of the organism can external factors have an effect on the dynamics of physiologic functions and inter-

actions. Beyond these limits, no power plant exists for generating behavioral potentials. Such basic phenomena as growth and maturation, homeostasis and adaptation, reflexive behavior and constitution remain chameleonic allegories without the solid foundations of genetic principles.<sup>1</sup>

## SELF-PERCEPTION

Inheritance and environment are forces acting on the child impersonally, as it were. As he grows and matures, the child develops a concept of himself which, accurate or inaccurate, is a powerful internal determiner of his personality, of his habitual behavior. This "self" which the child (and adult, too, for that matter) perceives consists of his awareness of himself as a person—an individual with a system of ideas, attitudes, values, and commitments. (Jersild, 1951)

It begins, hazily in infancy, with the child's awareness of himself as a creature separate from his environment. It develops in early childhood as he interacts, successfully and unsuccessfully, with his physical and social environment. The concept evolves through the rest of life, slowly adjusting to new experiences and insights.

While self-understanding is a lifetime process, the school beginner has a concept of himself which is instrumental in governing his behavior. He sees himself as belonging to one sex or the other, as being physically competent (or incompetent) at a certain level, as being of much or little value to others, of being a good or poor learner, and so on. Regardless of the reality of his notions about himself, he will behave in relative consistency with them.

While the self-concept is unique and personal, it derives from social experience. A person sees himself as a success or a failure only in relation to his experiences with others, or *in the way those experiences have been interpreted for him*. Take the case of a three-year-old girl who starts Sunday school in her family's church. At Christmastime her little class sings, with much enthusiasm and little skill, "Away in the Manger," a favorite seasonal hymn for children. She comes home and happily reports that she can now sing, and demonstrates with her garbled version of the

<sup>1</sup> Franz J. Kallmann, "The Genetics of Human Behavior," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 113, December, 1956, p. 496.

song. What happens next is important. If older siblings and parents offer applause and praise, she is a "success" and is prone to seek more singing experience. If she is ridiculed or ignored, she is a "failure" and is a little less likely to enjoy further singing experience. Thus, social response to a bit of behavior has a twofold effect. First, it encourages the child to make an assumption about his own competence, and second, it predisposes the child to seek or avoid further experience of the same kind.

Now, obviously, children are not such tender plants that they will wilt at one unkind touch like the one described above. But continuous discouragement, ridicule, or suggestion of failure will instill in the child feelings or convictions of inadequacy that will color his general self-concept as well as his judgment of competence in the area in question. Should it be inferred, then, that praise and reward should be unvarying in order that a child may develop a positive image of himself? Of course not. Unrealistic praise has bad long-term effects, too (although with children it is probably better to err on the positive than the negative side). Who has not suffered through musical atrocities committed by some protected adolescent or young adult who has never learned the truth about his or her lack of talent? When dreams of a career in music crash for such persons, the personality insult is as great as the vocational loss.

The self-concept is built on a base of reality—what the child actually is, physically, mentally, emotionally. It is shaped and molded by the child's experiences in the social and physical world. It is maintained as the individual strives to "be himself." The child accepts what is consistent with his self-image and rejects what is incompatible.

Brian, at age five, was bright, somewhat smaller than his peers, but wiry and agile. He had somehow acquired a feeling that he would fail at most of the tasks he tried, perhaps in part from the influence of a demanding and perfectionistic father. Verbal evidence of this feeling was frequent in kindergarten. His response to any new task—climbing on the jungle gym, tumbling, finger painting—was likely to be, "I can't do that," "I might fall," or "I'll make a mess of this." That this was more than a verbal convention was evidenced by the fact that when his teacher tried ignoring him, he would sit passively while other children acted. Recognizing the extent of the problem, the kindergarten teacher talked with his parents (who had not recognized this aspect of his behavior as a matter for concern) and secured their cooperation



in helping Brian feel more adequate and successful at home. The teacher assigned her cadet assistant to help Brian, especially in gaining confidence through success on playground and in classroom. Slow improvement was noted, but Brian still seemed to see himself as generally inadequate by the end of the year.

As the above account suggests, self-concept is influential in school work. Jersild says, "The learner perceives, interprets, accepts, resists or rejects what he meets at school in the light of the self system he has within him." (Jersild, 1952) Sears studied manifestations of self-concept in six- to ten-year-old school children. She was concerned with the relation of self-concept to the child's peers and teacher and to his functioning in a number of areas of endeavor. Her findings point to some of the ways the self-concept affects personality during the elementary school years:

1. Self-concepts for different areas of competence were highly inter-correlated, pointing to the presence of a general predisposition to regard various aspects of the self in consistent ways.

2. Self-concepts were affected by the judgments of significant others in the social environment. There was greater agreement (especially for boys) between self and teacher-evaluation than between self and classmate's evaluation.

3. Self-concepts were relatively stable over a year's time.

4. Height of self-concept was associated with favorable attitudes toward school and creative types of thinking.

5. Children who were highly competent in culturally important areas tended to be judged more effective in school activities and aspects of personality than those less competent, although objective measures and self-rating often did not bear out the attributed competence. In other words, children often do not feel themselves to be as good as they are rated. (Sears, 1960)

To summarize, much behavior, both in and outside the classroom, is determined by the child's self-image and by his attempts to "be himself"—the self that he perceives.

## SOME ATTRIBUTES OF PERSONALITY

When is personality formed and stabilized? How consistent is it? The answers to these questions determine the degree to which the behavior can be predicted, and they have a bearing on the amount and kind of change which can be expected in a child.

There is no one point in the life span when personality is "formed." It is in a continual process of change, of evolution and

growth, throughout life. Like other human characteristics—physical growth for example—the rate of development is most rapid in infancy and early childhood, with decelerating rate to adolescence, and with very slow change thereafter. Practically speaking, then, the child's personality is pretty well structured by the time he starts school.

It is the tendency of personality structure to resist change—to maintain familiar percepts, relationships, and self-images. The reasons for this resistance to change are numerous. One, of course, is the stability of attributes; that is, the child continues to have the same body, the same sensory apparatus, the same abilities, and other characteristics. Another reason is the relative continuity of experience; most children continue to have the same parents and social group and to attend the same school each day. Habits of perception of both self and others are built up and provide continuity and consistency even where it does not exist in reality.

On the other hand, change does occur, some of it stimulated by physical and intellectual growth in the child, some of it engendered by pressure of social change. The product of these conflicting forces is a tendency toward consistency and continuity, with change appearing slowly, gradually, and in line with previous personality. Never (except perhaps occasionally in psychosis) is personality change sudden or dramatic or out of line with earlier characteristics. "Change" is too strong a word; "development" is better and more consistent with the facts.

Recognition of the stability and consistency of personality is vital in working with children. Prediction is possible only when a certain amount of stability exists in the subject of study. There is enough stability in personality to make it safe to say that the best predictor of anyone's behavior is knowledge of what he has done in the past. Thus, knowledge of a child's earlier characteristics is useful in evaluating his present and forecasting his future.

Of course, children do change over time. A ten-year-old is not the same child he was at six. Knowledge of the world, of people, and of manners influences the way a youngster responds to others. Growth, both physical and intellectual, increases capability for understanding and acting. Learning experiences modify behavior. Manifestation of traits changes; what is purely physical

aggression at six is by age ten a more civilized and grown-up verbal aggressiveness. But the characteristic—aggressiveness—is still there, even though it shows itself in a more controlled and acceptable manner.

Understanding of the nature of personality consistency over time is vital to anyone—parent, teacher, counselor—who works with children. The most important lesson to be learned is that dramatic and striking changes in personality will not—cannot—occur. Behavioral manifestations of personality characteristics can be modified through learning experiences, but the changes will be consistent with existing personality structure. Those who would help children realize the best that is in them must begin by accepting the child as he is, and by helping him learn and grow within that context.

## Emotions

Inextricably bound up with a concept of an individual's personality is a view of him as an emotional creature. Quite early in life a person develops habitual ways of responding emotionally to all sorts of situations, and these habits of response are part of his uniqueness. Sometimes they are obvious to all.

Gretchen was the only girl in a family of five children. Her parents, who worked a small rented farm, had little education and little time for the niceties of living. The family was regarded as honest and respectable in the community, but the crudeness and roughness of family life did not attract friends. Three of Gretchen's brothers were older and had dropped out of school at the end of eighth grade. The children teased, fought, and bickered among themselves, and each one learned to anticipate hostility and to respond by attacking first. On the school bus and the playground her peers soon learned that any jokes or hostile moves would set off Gretchen in a rage; she would hit, scratch, and was especially adept at kicking, which won her the sobriquet of "Muley." She was, in her way, respectful to her teachers, but even in the classroom she would take quick offense when criticized. She was fairly bright, and a succession of teachers tried to calm her down, but her incendiary nature made her a tempting target for pranksters.

Through grade-school years she gradually gained some control over her rages, but when she left school at eighth grade, she was still hot-tempered and quickly responsive.

## INDIVIDUAL EMOTIONALITY

How does a person acquire his "emotional style"? In much the same fashion that personality in general is acquired—that is, by inheritance of structures predisposed to function in certain ways, and through learning experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Since emotion is basically physical, inheritance plays a large part in structuring emotional capacities or predispositions. The entire organism participates when a situation is perceived as calling for emotion. A part of the nervous system called the autonomic is stimulated by higher brain centers to make the appropriate changes in physical functioning. In strong emotion such as anger or fear, the organism is put on a kind of emergency footing and is prepared for action: heart rate increases, blood pressure rises, respiration increases, extra sugar is released into the blood stream, digestion slows down, pupils of the eye dilate, and perspiration increases, among other things. It is in this process that the influence of heredity can be most readily seen; the rate of response, and to some extent the amount of response, being physical, have a large genetic component.

But emotional expression does not occur until a situation is perceived as calling for it. Here learning experiences are vital. Six-year-old Bobby comes home from play, dirty and late to dinner, accompanied by his friend Charles. Bobby's mother meets them at the door with a smile and "Well, Robert, you finally decided to drag your dirty self home." To Charles the greeting is pleasant and somewhat of a relief, for he is aware that Bobby suffers some trepidation about his condition. He is puzzled as Bobby blanches and begins to cry; sensing trouble, Charles runs home. From past experience Bobby recognizes the tight-lipped smile, the sarcasm, the "Robert" instead of "Bobby" as forerunners of a miserable evening of scolding, recrimination, and general discomfort. His emotional response is part fear and part anger. His inherited system expresses the emotion, but it is perception based on learning from past experiences that tells him, first,

<sup>2</sup> For a general discussion of the sources and development of emotion, see Chapter 4, "Feeling and Emotion," in Morgan, C. T., *Introduction to Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961). Nearly all introductory psychology texts have some discussion of this topic.



whether this situation calls for emotion, and second, how much and what emotion.

Learning experiences not only determine perception, but also have some influence on the expression of emotion. In the case of Gretchen (discussed earlier) it is probable that her hitting, scratching, and kicking were learned ways of expressing anger, hostility, and fear. Such ways are acquired by imitating the models in the home and general environment (Gretchen's brothers, for example), by conditioning—that is, out of the satisfaction or reinforcement experienced from behavior—and by habituation. Lack of facility or awareness of other ways of handling emotion also contributes to stereotyped and habitual emotional expression.

Thus every child develops a pattern of emotionality that is part of the core of his personality. Since every child's hereditary characteristics and physical constitution are different, and since his experience is unique, his emotional ways will be clearly his own. Like other aspects of personality, his emotional characteristics are relatively continuous, habitual, and predictable. Short-term variations may, however, be great, for reasons to be advanced.

## DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTION

While emotional development is unique and individual, there are some trends common to children in general. As everyone knows, infants are highly excitable, and their emotions are diffuse and general in expression. In early childhood, emotions such as anger, fear, and love are expressed spontaneously, freely, and (generally) briefly. Adult behavior, on the other hand, is much more complex: a grownup's emotions are likely to be mixed, to be repressed or at least inhibited somewhat in expression, and are likely to persist over relatively long periods of time. What is termed "development of emotions" consists largely of getting from the one stage of simple, open, brief, freely expressed emotion to the adult stage of complex, long-lasting, rather tightly controlled emotion.

There are no "emotional age" norms for children in the sense that there are "mental age" norms. Each child has to be consid-



ered more in terms of himself than in terms of group performance. One reason for the lack of norms is that emotion is generated in complex and varied situations, where intelligence is (or can be) evaluated in rather highly structured academic situations. Emotional performance is much more variable than intellectual.

Since negative emotions especially are produced by frustration and conflict, the length of time the child has been involved in a frustrating situation is influential on his reaction. For example, a quarrel with mother over wearing overshoes could be expected to produce heightened emotionality in a ten-year-old girl during the early part of the school day; if the maternal relationship were one of continuing hostility, rejection, and conflict, it is safe to assume that the child's heightened tension would be exhibited constantly, or at least that a little additional frustration might set off an inordinate emotional response.

Physical condition is another area of influence. The grouchiness of children who are "coming down with something" or just recovering is well known. Fatigue is another factor in emotional behavior, especially in younger children. Even the teacher is not immune to this influence!

For reasons cited here, and other related factors, it is important to know a good bit about a child before attempting to evaluate his emotional maturity. Is the behavior observed habitual, periodic, or extraordinary? What is his day-in, day-out typical level of emotionality? What kind of family relations does he have? Is his health good? Is his diet adequate? Is his rest sufficient? Does he have satisfying relations with peers? Questions such as these must be answered if evaluation of his behavior is to be meaningful.

A teacher will come to know, through experience and study, what is typical of the age group she teaches, and thus can compare the level of maturity of an individual child with that of his age group.<sup>3</sup> Of greater importance than a child's relative emo-

<sup>3</sup> Books dealing with human development age by age or stage by stage will give some descriptions of "typical" six-year-old emotional behavior, seven-year-old behavior, etc. Such descriptions may suggest some central tendencies of age-linked behavior to the inexperienced teacher, and may thus be of value in preparing to work with children. The cautions cited in this book about the range and reasons for individual differences should be taken to heart, however, when reading such generalizations. See, for exam-

tional maturity, however, is consideration of the general state of his "emotional health." At any age a person should be experiencing mostly positive emotions. While everyone feels fear and anger occasionally, a child for whom one of these is the dominant and prevalent emotion will be troubled and unhappy. He will be unable to study and learn effectively, for any strong emotion interferes with learning. He will probably be in social difficulty, because emotionally upset persons are not good company.

More damaging, perhaps, than overt fear or anger is the emotional state described as anxiety. Where fear is specific and can usually be related to an object, person, or situation, anxiety is likely to be generalized and diffuse. It is usually easier for a person to control or eliminate specific fears than it is to relieve generalized anxiety. Because of its pervasive nature, anxiety is considered by many mental hygienists to be the basic cause of much human maladjustment and misery. Tense and unhappy children who overreact emotionally or who seem to keep down all emotional expression may be anxious and in need of help.

In addition to considering a child's emotional health, it is important to judge whether progress is being made. Is a youngster a little more mature and controlled in the spring than he was in the fall? Is his emotional behavior just as appropriate to his age this year as last, or even more satisfactory? With children, it is just about as important to know what they are *becoming* as to know what they *are*. While children live intensely in the present, the adults in their lives must be even more concerned with their futures.

## SEX

While sex as a developmental phenomenon is emphasized, appropriately enough, at adolescence, the sexuality of childhood is often overlooked.<sup>4</sup> The reasons are various—in part perhaps be-

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ple, the topic of emotional development in "Early Childhood" (pp. 133-140), "Late Childhood" (pp. 177-183), and "Puberty" (pp. 242-251) in Hurlock, Elizabeth, *Developmental Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959).

<sup>4</sup> There are surprisingly few references to children's sex behavior in the literature of human development. For a general discussion of this area, see "Child Sexuality," by W. R. Reeve, in *The Encyclopedia of Sexual Behavior*, edited by Albert Ellis and Albert Abarbanel (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1961).

cause of ignorance or Victorian wishful thinking ("children are so innocent"), because of theoretical conviction (to a Freudian, mid-childhood is a period of sexual latency), or in large part, perhaps, because sex behavior in the elementary years is usually not as straightforward and obvious as it will be later.

As noted earlier, a child's sexual nature develops along with other characteristics. Much of very early sexuality is self-centered: the child discovers pleasure as he manipulates his genitals in the course of general bodily self-exploration. Masturbation continues to be practiced sporadically or frequently throughout childhood and adolescence by practically all boys and a high percentage of girls. (Reevy, 1961) In normal development it is harmless, and disappears as maturity and the culture permit normal heterosexual expression of sexual needs. Where masturbation is excessive, it is probably an expression of anxiety or trouble in adjustment elsewhere, and may require treatment of cause rather than simply an attack on the symptoms.

There is a growing interest in sex throughout the years of development. In part this interest consists of curiosity about the structure and function of the opposite sex, about the origin of babies, and so on. Some of it is part of the general desire to know more about the sometimes-mysterious world that adults live in, and to sample (like smoking) some of what appears to be pleasure for grownups. Much of childhood sexuality, however, appears to be early manifestation of true sexual desire. Much of the teasing, hitting, and "horsing around" between the sexes in childhood is a forerunner of what will explicitly be sex play later, in adolescence.

Curiosity, masturbation, and some crude and early heterosexual play is the extent of most children's early sex experience. It is not uncommon, however, for two children of like sex (boys more often than girls), or even several children, to practice group or mutual masturbation. Less frequently, sex play (beyond the exploration of "playing Doctor" and the like) does occur between sexes. Generally speaking, excessive and abnormal concern about sex, or involvement in sexual episodes in childhood, suggest deeper problems of a nature which require professional help.

Groups of parents, teachers, and administrators differ markedly in their beliefs about the role of the school in promoting good sexual adjustment. Whether a given school devotes class-

room time to "sex education," any teacher has the obligation to promote healthy and respectful relationships between boys and girls, to encourage the development of appropriate sex roles (see Chapter 2), and to seek referral of children who seem to have adjustment problems concerning sex.

## Understanding Behavior

Terms such as "adjustment," "mental health," and "normality" are popularly used as labels for concepts which are difficult to define or describe. The words have some generally accepted connotations, but they are used in situations that are complex and somewhat unclear. The basic difficulty lies not in semantics, but rather in a way of thinking. Our culture impels us toward dichotomous judgments. A thing is good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, approved or disapproved, and so on. There is a resulting tendency to think about a child's behavior in dichotomous terms: he is healthy or unhealthy, well adjusted or maladjusted, a good boy or a bad boy.

If such black-or-white judgments could legitimately be made about behavior, the thinking of teachers and counselors about their students might be easier. In reality, of course, all behavior exists on a continuum. Furthermore, there are bound to be some inconsistencies within a child, and some changes from day to day.

A teacher can gain more insight into children and can help them more by trying to *understand* behavior rather than by trying to judge it. Of course, there is profit in evaluation: Is a child more or less mature in his emotional behavior than his peers? Does he display psychoneurotic symptoms? In what ways is he like and unlike his peers? Evidence bearing on such questions will be of value if it is used to understand behavior, not just to judge or label it. "Understanding" is an idea easier to advocate than to practice. In work with children, it implies an attempt to look for causes to accept behavior as a product of these causes and to accept the child as a person, however disagreeable or distasteful his behavior may be. Such an approach combines scientific objectivity with humanitarian warmth. But recognizing some antecedents of a child's behavior is not enough; the teacher must try to perceive what an experience means to a child. As one psy-



chologist puts it, "The 'facts' regarding human behavior have little meaning in themselves. It is the manner in which they are perceived that tells how they will influence behavior." (Moustakas, 1956)

While it is ambiguous, the term "adjustment" seems to have no rival in discussions of how a child gets along in a situation. "Good" and "poor" adjustment are meaningful only in terms of the situation he is in. If the circumstances he finds himself in are bad, then rebellion and attempts to change the circumstances would be healthy and desirable. If circumstances are good, then rebellion might be considered maladjustment. Adjustment to school may be relatively good, and adjustment to home, bad. For such reasons, behavior must be studied in terms of the total life situation, not in a vacuum.

### INFLUENCES ON ADJUSTMENT

It is probably safe to say that no element in a child's person or experience is without influence on his adjustment. In trying to understand the behavior of a child at a particular time, it is necessary to consider multiple factors:

1. The child's personality. This includes his physical characteristics, abilities, social background and experience, social class and family, his emotional status (especially his relationship with parents), his concept of himself, and his habitual or typical modes of behavior.

2. The situation he is experiencing. Especially important is the degree to which his needs are being met, for frustration leads to heightened emotionality and often to anxiety, which in turn is the root of much maladaptive behavior. It is not always easy, of course, to determine just what a child's unsatisfied needs are.

3. The interaction of the two above. The relationship of personality and situation is a complex one. For example, a boy's inherent slow growth rate and consequent small size may make him physically inferior to faster-growing age mates. Aggressive and hostile behavior, developed out of his emotional nature and learning experiences at home, is his typical mode of response to frustration. Aggression, particularly with this boy's poor physical status, leads to complete peer rejection and thus to more frustration. Inadequate adjustment in this example, as in most, lies not just in the child's personality nor only in the situation at school, but in the interaction of the two.

Another example might be that of a shy and withdrawn girl. She was sheltered and overprotected in preschool years, and frequent illness (and maternal concern for the possibility of illness) during early school days reduced her social contacts with



peers. Her low energy level and retiring social nature now lead her to remain quietly by herself; since she never puts herself forward, the other children ignore her or reject her when she is brought to their attention. Since she bothers no one, her teachers leave her to herself also. (Aggressive youngsters are more likely to receive help, because their behavior commands attention!) As time passes, she falls further and further behind in social skills because she is not getting experience. Again, personality traits and a situation interact to produce less-than-adequate adjustment.

Whoever seeks a cause, an explanation for behavior, is almost surely doomed to failure. It follows, too, that attempts to help a child must be based on a search for multiple causes.

## How the Teacher Can Help

All children have problems of some magnitude; most have the capacity to work their way through to adequate solutions to these problems. Some have difficulties beyond their capacity. Others get along, but not so effectively as they might.

The classroom teacher, being in regular and intimate contact with young lives, is in a position to be of much help.<sup>5</sup> It must be remembered, of course, that the teacher is an educator and not a therapist, and that the school is an educational institution, not a hospital. That is, educators have great individual and group opportunity to help troubled children, but help must consist largely of appropriate learning experiences, both preventive and palliative.

## LEARNING

Learning has multiple effects on the child. One, of course, is any change wrought by the content of what he has acquired. Another is determined by the circumstances in which the learning took place—a social-group context, for example. A third effect re-

<sup>5</sup> A stimulating book in the teacher-pupil relations area is Redl, F., and Wattenberg, W., *Mental Hygiene in Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1951). See also Arthur, Grace, *Tutoring as Therapy* (New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1946).

sults from the motivational-emotional experiences he has—success or failure.

While all content of school material hopefully will enrich the child's life, some is of more relevance to adjustment than others. For example, geography or social science may be taught as a collection of facts about the earth and the people in it. Or the facts may be taught in such a way that something of the wonderful diversity of people and their ways may become meaningful to a class, and as a result they may be a little more ready to accept the "differences" of some other youngster—or, more important, of themselves. Physiology or a course in health may be taught as facts about structure and function of physical systems, or it may communicate something of the great diversity of growth patterns—of the ways in which normal people may differ and still be normal—it may provide reassurance about the inevitability of maturation, and so on. In almost any area, both content and approach may aid children in understanding and accepting themselves and others.

For good mental health, a child needs a preponderance of success experiences. Assignment of a child to a class, and determination of level of difficulty of material, should be done with probable success or failure in mind. In past years, some educators have interpreted the above generalization as implying that everything should be easy so that no one could fail. Not so. Healthy people fail and learn from their failures. Success is not real and satisfying if there is no challenge. But placing a child in a situation where failure is inevitable can have only unfortunate results for learning as well as for adjustment. Success, on the other hand, stimulates the pupil to seek more learning and gives him some sense of personal competence and worth.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the social situation of the classroom may be used to teach human-relations skills and to provide mutual support for children as they develop.

## EMOTIONS

Emotional growth may be encouraged in two ways: one is through the teacher's personal relationship with students, and the other is through helping children learn healthful ways of handling emotion.

Children form strong ties with teachers. Especially with younger children, the teacher may supplement relations with parents and provide another dimension of affection and relationship. For many older children, at an age when development of independence or circumstances may have increased the emotional distance from parents, a favorite teacher may be a good substitute.

Some cautions must be noted. "Crushes" are common in late childhood and early adolescence, and they call for intelligent handling if too much involvement (or rejection, on the other hand) is to be avoided. Too, it is important that the teacher have adequate emotional ties outside the classroom and not be dependent on the children's love for her own satisfaction. But properly controlled, children's affection for a teacher can be used to their emotional benefit.

The classroom can be a living laboratory in the healthy use, control, and expression of emotion. Proper management will provide opportunity during the day for children to burn up some of the undischarged energy they have generated with their emotions. Even children in the lower grades can grasp the idea of why people feel as they do, and why certain behaviors can be expected in fear, anger, frustration, and the like. They can learn in class about healthy and unhealthy ways of expressing emotion, and can even help and support one another in learning to understand, control, and channel their emotions.

## DISTURBED CHILDREN

It is inevitable that some children will suffer from constitutional or experiential conditions resulting in behavior which cannot be handled by the teacher, which disrupts the classroom so that learning is difficult, or which presages greater future problems for the child. It is important that such children be identified early and that proper referral for diagnosis be made. It is better to err on the side of overconcern than lack of concern here.

Every person who works with children needs to recognize the point at which he runs out of competence in dealing with a problem; he must recognize, too, where his commitment to working with individuals begins to conflict with his responsibility to the group.



Completely adequate referral services are, unfortunately, rare; the situation is improving steadily, however. Principals and superintendents are usually knowledgeable about services, both public and private. The services vary so much that no generalization beyond a listing of possibilities would be realistic.

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## Recommended Reading

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